ΕΝ ΟΛΙΓΩ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ

The Almost Christian discovered,

OR

THE FALSE PROFESSOR TRYED AND CAST.

Being the substance of seven

SERMONS.

First preached at *Sepulchers*, *London*, 1661. and now at the importunity of friends, made publick.

By MATTHEW MEAD.

Luke 16. 14. 15. *And the Pharisees who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him: And Jesus said unto them; Ye are they which justifie your selves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: For that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.*

Glasgow, By ROBERT SANDERS, Printer to the City and University, and are to be sold in his Shop, 1678.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE CONGREGATION at *Sepulchers*, that were the Auditors of these Sermons, Grace and Peace be multiplyed.

BELOVED,

What the meaning of this Providence was, that called me to the occupation of my talent among you this Summer, will be best read and understood by the effects of it upon your own souls; The kindly increase of grace and holiness in heart and life, can only prove it to have been in mercy: where there is not the fruit of the Word, there it becomes a judgement. The Word travels with life or death, salvation or damnation, and bringeth forth one or other in every soul that hears it. I would not for a world (were it in my power to make the choice) that my labors, which were meant and designed for the promotion of your immortal souls, to the glory of the other world, in a present pursuance of the things of your peace, should be found to have been a ministration of death and condemnation, *in the great day of Jesus Christ. Yea, this (the Lord knoweth) is thee too common effect of the most plain and powerful preaching of the Gospel.* The waters of the Sanctuary *do not always heal where they come; for there are* miry and marish places that shall be given to salt. *Ezec. 47. 11. The same word is elsewhere in Scripture rendered*

barrenes *he* turneth a fruitful land into barrenes, Psal. 107.34. *so that the judgement denounced upon these miry and marish places, is, that the* curse of barrenes *shall rest upon them, notwithstanding the* waters of the Sanctuary *overflow them*

It is sad, but certain, that the Gospel inflicteth a death of its own, as well as the Law; or else how are those trees in Jude 12. *said to be* δὶς ἀποθανόντα, twice dead, plucked up by the roots? *Yea, that which in it self is the greatest mercy, through the interposition of mens lusts, and the efficacy of this cursed sin of unbelief, turneth to the greatest judgement; as the richest & most generous wine makes the sharpest vinegar. Our Lord Christ himself,* Rom. 5. 8. *the choicest mercy that the bowels of a God could bless a perishing world withall, whose coming (himself bears witness,* John 3. 16.*) was no less errand then that of eternal life and blessedness to the lost and cursed sons of* Adam: *Yet to how many was he* a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. *Yea,* a gin and a snare, Isa. 2. 14. *and that to both the houses of* Israel; *the only professing people of God at that day in the world. And is he not a stone of stumbling in the Ministery of the Gospel to many Professors to this very day, upon which they fall and are broken? When he saith,* Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, Matth. 11. 6. *he doth therein plainly suppose, that both in his person and doctrine, the generality of men would be offended in him.*

Not that this is the design of Christ and the Gospel, but it comes so to pass through the corruptions of the hearts of men, whereby they make light of Christ, and stand out against that life and grace which the Lord Jesus by his blood so dearly purchased, and it

by the preaching of the Goſpel ſo freely tendred; the wilful refuſal whereof wil as ſurely double our damnation, as the acceptance thereof will ſecure our eternal ſalvation.

Oh conſider! it is a thing of the moſt ſerious concernment in the world, how we carry our ſelves under the Goſpel, and which what diſpoſitions and affections of heart and ſoul, ſeaſons of grace are entertained; this being taken into the conſideration to make it weigh, that we are the nearer to heaven or to hell, to ſalvation or to damnation, by every ordinance we ſit under: Boaſt not therefore of priviledges enjoyed with neglect of the important duties thereby required. Remember Capernaums *caſe, and tremble,* Matth. 11. 23. *As many go to heaven by the very gates of hell, ſo more go to hell by the gates of heaven, in that the number of them that profeſs Chriſt, is greater then the number of them that truly cloſe with Chriſt.*

Beloved, I know the Preaching of the Goſpel *hath proſelyted many of you into a profeſſion; but I fear that but few of you are brought by it to a true cloſe with the Lord Chriſt for ſalvation. (I beſeech you beare with my jealouſie for it is the fruit of a tender love to your precious ſouls.) Moſt men are good Chriſtians in the verdict of their own opinions; but you know the Law alloweth no man to be a witneſs in his own caſe, becauſe their affection uſually outacteth conſcience and ſelf-love balketh truth for its own intereſt.*

The heart of man is the greateſt Impoſtor and Cheat in the world; God himſelf adjuſts it, Jer. 17. 9 The heart is deceitful above all things. *Some of the deceits whereof you will find diſcovered in this* Treatiſe, *which ſhoweth you that every Grace hath*

its counterfeit, and that the higheſt profeſſion may be, where true converſion is not.

The deſign hereof is not to break the bruiſed reed, nor to quench the ſmoaking flax, Matth. 12. 20. *not to diſcourage the weakeſt believer, but to awaken formal Profeſſors. I would not ſad the hearts of any,* whom God would not have made ſad, Ezek. 13 22. *though I know it is hard to rip up the dangerous eſtat and condition of a profeſſing hypocrite, but that the weak Chriſtian will think himſelf concerned in the diſcovery And therefore as I preached a Sermon on ſincerity among you, for the ſupport and encouragement of ſuch, at the end of this; ſo I did purpoſe to have printed it with this: But who can be maſter of his own purpoſes, that is (as I am) under ſuch dayly variety of providences? your kindly acceptation of this, will make me a debtor for that.*

The Dedication hereof belongs to you on a double account; for as it had not been preached, but that love to your ſouls cauſed it', ſo it had much leſs been printed, but that your importunat deſire procured it: And therefore what entertainment ſoever it findeth in the world, yet I hope I may expect you will welcome it, eſpecially conſidering it was born under your roof, and therefore hopes to find favor in your eyes, and room in your hearts.

Accept it, I beſeech you, as a publick acknowledgment of the engagements which your great, and (I think I may ſay) unparalleled reſpects have laid me under, which I can no way compenſate, but by my prayers; and if you will take them for ſatisfaction. I do promiſe to be your remembrance at the Throne of Grace, whilſt I am, MATTHW MEAD.

TO

TO THE READER.

READER,

I know how customary it is for men to ascend the publick stage with premised Apologies, for the weakness and unworthiness of their labors, which is an argument that their desires (either for the sake of others profit, or their own credit, or both) are stretched beyond the tedder of their abilities, and that they covet to commend themselves to the worlds censure, in a better dress then common infirmity will allow: for my own part, I may truly say with *Gideon*, *Behold my thousand is the meanest* (my talent is the smallest) *and I am the least in my fathers house*, Judg. 6 15. And therefore this appearance in publick is not the fruit of my own choice; which would rather have been in some other subject; wherein I stand in some sense, indebted to the world, or else in somewhat more digested, and possibly better fitted for common acceptation: but this is but to consult the interest of a mans own name, which in matters of this concernment, is no better then a *sowing to the flesh*, and the harvest of such a seed time will be *in incorruption*, *Gal.* 6. 2.

Thou hast here one of the saddest considerations imaginable presented to thee, and that is, How

far it is poſſible a man may go in a profeſſion of Religion, and yet after all fall ſhort of ſalvation; How far he may run, and yet *ſo run as to obtain.* 1 *Cor.* 9. 14. this; I ſay, is ſad, but not ſo ſad as true; for our Lord Chriſt doth plainly atteſt it, *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able,* *Luke* 13. 14.

My deſign herein is, that the formal ſleepy profeſſor may be awakened, and the cloſe hypocrit diſcovered; but my fear is, that weak believers may be hereby diſcouraged; for as it is hard to show how low a Child of God may fall into ſin, and yet have true grace, but that the ſinners will be apt there upon to preſume, ſo it is as hard to show how high an hypocrit may riſe in a profeſſion, and yet have no grace, but that the believer will be apt thereupon to deſpond. The prevention whereof I have careſully endeavored, by showing, That though a man may go thus far, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, yet a man may fall ſhort of this, and be a true *Chriſtian* notwithſtanding: judge not therefore thy ſtate by any one *Character* thou findeſt laid down of a falſe profeſſor, but read the whole, and then make a judgement: For I have cared, as not to *give childrens bread to dogs*, *Matt.* 15. 26. ſo not to uſe the *dog whip* to ſcarce the *children*: yet I could wiſh that this *Book* might fall into the hands of ſuch only whom it chiefly concerns, who *have a name to live, and yet are dead*, *Rev.* 3. 1. being buſie with the *form of godlineſs*, but ſtrangers to the *power of it*, 2 *Tim* 3. 5. Theſe are the proper ſubjects of this Treatiſe: And the Lord follow it with his

his bleſſing where ever it comes, that it may be an awakening word to all ſuch, & eſpecially to that generation of profligat profeſſors, (with which thisage abounds) who, if they keep to their Church, bow the knee, talk out a few prayers, and at a good time receive the *Sacrament*, think they do enough for heaven, and hereupon judge their condition ſafe, and their ſalvation ſure, though there be a hell of ſin in their hearts, *and the poyſon of aſps is under their lips*, *Rom.* 3.13. their minds being as yet carnal and unconverted, and their converſations filthy and unſanctified: If eternal life be of ſo eaſie attainment, and to be had at ſo cheap a rate, our Lord Chriſt meant to tell us, *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and there be few that find it*, *Matth.* 7. 14. And why the Apoſtle ſhould perplex us with ſuch a needleſs injunction, *To give diligence to make their calling and election ſure*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 10. Certainly therefore it is no ſuch eaſie thing to be ſaved, as many make it, and that thou wilt ſee plainly in the following diſcourſe. I have been ſome what ſhort in the application of it, and therefore let me here be thy remembrancer in five important duties.

Firſt, *Take heed of reſting in a form of godlineſs*, as if duties *ex opere operato*, could confer grace: a lifeleſs formality is advanced to a very high eſteem in the world, as a *kab of doves dung* was ſold in the famine of *Samaria*, at a very dear rate, 2 *Kings* 6. 25. Alace! the profeſſion of godlineſs is but a ſandy foundation, to build the hope of an immortal ſoul upon for eternity; remember the Lord Jeſus Chriſt called him a fooliſh

builder, *that founded his house upon the sand, Mat.* 7. 16. and the sad event proved him so, *for it fell, and great was the fall of it, vers.* 27. Oh! therefore lay thy foundations by faith upon the Rock Christ Jesus; look to Christ through all, and rest upon Christ in all, 1 *Cor.* 3. 12.

Secondly, *Labor to see an excellency in the power of godliness*, a beauty in the life of Christ. If the means of grace have a loveliness in them, surely grace it self hath much more; for *finis dat amabilitatem mediis*, the goodness of the means lyes in its suitableness and serviceableness to the end. the form of godliness hath no goodness in it, any farther then it steads and becomes useful to the soul in the power and practice of godliness. The life of holiness is the only excellent life: it is the life of Saints and Angels in heaven, yea it is the life of God himself. As it is a great proof of the baseness and filthiness of sin, that sinners seek to cover it; so it is a great proof of the excellency of godliness, that so many pretend to it. The very hypocrits fair profession pleads the cause of Religion, although the hypocrit is then really worst, then he is seemingly best.

Thirdly, *Look upon things to come as the greatest realities*; for *non entis & non apparentis idem est affectus*; things that are not believed, work no more upon the affections, then if they had no being; and this is the grand reason why the generality of men suffer their affection to lacquey after the world, setting the creature in the place of God in their hearts.

Most men judge of the reality of things by their visibility and proximity to sense; and therefore the

the choice of that wretched Cardinal becomes their option, who would not leave his part in *Paris*, for his part in *Paradise*; ſure whatever his intereſt might be in the former, he had little enough in the latter. Well may covetouſneſs be called Idolatry, when it thus chooſes the world for its God, *Col* 3. 5.

O conſider! Eternity is no dream: Hell and the worm that never dies, *Matth.* 9. 44. is no melancholy conceit: Heaven is no feigned *Elyſium*. There is the greateſt reality imaginable in theſe things; though they are ſpiritual, and out of the ken of ſenſe, yet they are real, and within the view of faith. *Look not therefore at the things which are ſeen, but look at the things which are not ſeen; for the things that are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal*, 2 *Cor* 4. 18.

Fourthly, *Set a high rate upon thy ſoul*; what we lightly prize, we eaſily part with: many men ſell their ſouls (at the rate of profane *Eſaus* birthright) *for a morſel of bread*, *Heb.* 12. 20. nay, *for that which* (in the ſenſe of the holy Ghoſt) *is not bread*, *Iſai.* 55. 2. O conſider! thy ſoul is the moſt precious and invaluable jewel in the world; it is σοφὸς τέκτονος καλὸν ποίκιλμα, the moſt beautiful piece of Gods workmanſhip in the whole creation: it is that which bears the Image of God, and which was bought with the blood of the ſon of God, 1 *Pet.* 1. 18, 19. And ſhall we not ſet a value upon it, and count it precious?

The Apoſtle *Peter* ſpeaks of three very precious things; *A precious Chriſt*, 1 Pet. 2. 7. *Precious promiſes*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. *And precious faith*, 2 Pet. 1. 1.

Now the preciouſneſs of all theſe lyes in their uſefulneſs to the ſoul. Chriſt is *precious*, as being the Redeemer of precious ſouls: the promiſes are *precious*, as making over this *precious Chriſt to precious ſouls. Faith is precious*, as bringing a *precious ſoul* to cloſe with a *precious Chriſt*, as he is held forth in the *precious promiſes*. Oh! take heed that thou art not found over-valuing other things, and undervaluing thy ſoul. Shall thy fleſh, nay, thy beaſt be loved, and ſhall thy ſoul be ſlighted? Wilt thou clothe and pamper thy body, and yet take no care of thy ſoul? This is as if a man ſhould feed his dog, and ſtarve his child: *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God ſhall deſtroy both it and them*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 13. Oh! let not a tottering periſhing carkaſs have all your time and care, as if the life and ſalvation of thy ſoul were not worth the while.

Laſtly, *Meditat much of the ſtrictneſs and ſuddenneſs of that Judgement-day, which thou and I muſt paſs through into an everlaſting ſtate*, where in God the impartial judge will require an account at our hands, of all our talents and betruſtments: we muſt then account for time, how we have ſpent that: for eſtat, how we have imployed that: for ſtrength, how we have laid out that: for affections and mercies, how they have been improved: for the relations we ſtood in here, how they have been diſcharged: and for ſeaſons and means of grace, how they have been husbanded; and look how *we have ſowed here, ſo ſhall we reap hereafter*, *Gal.* 6. 7.

Reade, theſe are things that of all other deſerve moſt of, and call loudeſt for our utmoſt care and

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endeavour, though by the moſt leaſt minded. To conſider what a ſpirit of Atheiſm (if we may judge the tree by the fruits, *Matth.* 7. 19, 20. and the principle by the practice) the hearts of moſt men are filled with, who live as if God were not to be ſerved, nor Chriſt to be ſought, nor luſt to be mortified, nor ſelf to be denyed, nor the Scripture to be believed, nor the Judgement-day to be minded, nor hel to be feared, nor heaven to be deſired, nor the ſoul to be valued, but give up themſelves to a worſe then brutish ſenſuality, *To work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs, living without God in the world*, *Eph.* 4. 19. *and* 2. 12. This is a meditation fit enough to break our hearts, if at leaſt we were of holy *Davids* temper, who *beheld the tranſgreſſion, and was grieved, Pſal.* 119. 158. and had *rivers of water running down his eyes, becauſe men kept not Gods laws, verſ.* 136. The prevention and correction of this Soul-deſtroying diſtemper, is not the leaſt deſign of this Treatiſe now put into thine hand: though the chief vertue of this receit lyes in its ſoveraign uſe to aſſwage and cure the ſwelling tympany of hypocriſie, yet it may ſerve alſo (with Gods bleſſing) as a plaſter for the plague-ſore of profaneſs, if timely applyed by ſerious meditation, and carefully kept on by conſtant prayer.

READER, expect nothing of curioſity or quaintneſs, for then I ſhall deceive thee: but if thou wouldeſt have a touch-ſtone for the tryal of thy ſtate, poſſibly this may ſtead thee. If thou art either a ſtranger to a profeſſion, or an hypocrit under a profeſſion, then read and tremble; for thou art the man here pointed at.

---. Mutato nomine de te
Fabula narratur ---- Horat.

But if the Kingdom of God be come with power into thy ſoul; if Chriſt be formed in thee; if thy heart be upright and ſincere with God; then read and rejoyce, *Mark* 9. 1. *Luke* 17. 21.

I fear I have tranſgreſſed the bounds of an Epiſtle, the mighty God, whoſe prerogative it is to teach to profit, *Iſa.* 48. 17. whether by the tongue, or the pen, by ſpeaking or writing, bleſs this Tract, that it may be to thee as a cloud of rain to the dry ground, dropping fatneſs to thy ſoul, that ſo thy fleece being watered with thee *dew of heaven*, thou mayeſt *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 18. in whom I am,

Thy Friend and Servant,

MAT. MEAD.

London October 29. 1661.

ACTS

ACTS XXVI. 28.

Ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.

Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.

IN this Chapter you have the Apoſtle *Pauls* Apology, and defenſative Plea which he makes for himſelf, againſt thoſe blind *Jews* which did ſo malicioufly proſecute him before *Agrippa*, *Feſtus*, *Bernice*, and the Counſil.

In which Plea he doth chiefly inſiſt upon three things.

The manner of his life before converſion.

The manner of his converſion.

The manner of his life after converſion.

How he lived before converſion, he tells you from *verſ.* 4. *to* 13.

How God wrought on him to converſion, he tells you from *verſ.* 13. *to* 18.

How he lived after converſion, he tells you from *verſ.* 19. *to* 23.

Before converſion he was very Phariſaical.

The manner of his converſion was very wonderful.

The fruit of his converſion was very remarkable.

Before

Before conversion, he persecuted the Gospel which others preached: after conversion, he preached the Gospel which himself had persecuted.

While he was a persecutor of the Gospel, the *Jews* loved him; but now that (by the grace of God) he was become a Preacher of the Gospel, now the *Jews* hater him, & sought to kill him, *v.*21.

He was once against Christ, and then many were for him; but now that he was for Christ, all were against him: his being an enemy to Jesus, made others his friends; but when he came to own Jesus, then they became his enemies.

And this was the great charge they had against him, that of a great opposer, he was become a great professor.

Because God had changed him, therefore this inraged them. As if they would be the worse, because God had made him better, God had wrought on him by grace, and they seem to envy him the grace of God. *Hic vir invidet mihi gratiam Christi.*

He preached no treason, nor sowed no sedition only he preached repentance, and faith in Christ: and the resurrection, and for this he was called into question.

This is the breviat and sum of *Pauls* defence and plea for himself, which you find in the sequel of the Chapter, had a different effect upon his Judges.

Festus seems to censure him, *vers.* 24. *Agrippa* seems to be convinced by him, *vers.* 28. The whole Bench seem to acquit him, *v.* 30. 31. *Festus*

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he thinks *Paul* was beſide himſelf. *Agrippa* he is almoſt perſwaded to be ſuch a one as himſelf. *Feſtus* thinks him mad, becauſe he did not underſtand the doctrine of Chriſt, and the reſurrection: *Much learning hath made thee mad. Dei ſapientia, mundi eſt inſania, Malc. in loc.*

Agrippa he is ſo affected with his plea, that he is almoſt wrought into his principle: *Paul* pleads ſo effectually for his Religion, that *Agrippa* ſeems to be upon the turning point to his profeſſion. *Putat hominem eſſe fas naticum, Mar. in loc.*

Then Agrippa ſaid to Paul, Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.

Almoſt] ἐν ὀλίγῳ, ſo the *Greek*; the words make ſome debate among the Learned. I ſhall not trouble you with the various hints upon them by *Valla, Simplicius, Beza, Eraſmus* and others. I take the words as we read them, and they ſhow what an efficacy *Pauls* doctrine had upon *Agrippas* conſcience. Though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced. His conſcience was touched, though his heart was not renewed.

Obſerv. There is that in Religion which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the conſcience of ungodly men.

Thou perſwadeſt me] πείθεις, the word is from the Hebrew *pathath*, and it ſignifies both *ſuadere* and *perſuadere*, either to uſe arguments to prevail, or to prevail by the arguments uſed, *Suadere eſt conantis, perſuadere eſt efficientis. Beza.*

Now it is to be taken in the latter ſenſe here. to ſhow the influence of *Pauls* argument upon *Agrippa*, which had almoſt proſelyted him

to

to the profession of Christianity, *Suadet qui consulit; persuadet, qui quo vult inducit hominem. Eras.*

Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian,

[*A Christian*] χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.

I hope I need not tell you what a Christian is, though I am perswaded many that are called *Christians*, do not know what a Christian is; or if they do, yet they do not know what it is to be a Christian.

A Christian is a Disciple of Jesus Christ; one that believes in, and follows Christ. As he that imbraces the doctrine of *Arminus*, is called an *Arminian*; and as he that owns the doctrine and way of *Luther*, is called a *Lutheran*; so he that imbraces and owns and follows the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he is called a Christian.

The word is taken more largely, and more strictly: more largely, and so all that profess Christ come in the flesh, are called Christians, in opposition to *Heathens* that do not know Christ, and to the poor blind *Jews*, that will not own Christ; and to the *Mahometan*, that prefers Mahomet above Christ.

But now in Scripture, the word is of a more strict and narrow acceptation, it is used only to denominat the true Disciples and followers of Christ, *Acts* 11. 26. *The Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.* 1. *Pet.* 4, 16. *If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed*; that is, a Member, a Disciple of Christ, and so in the Text, *Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.*

The word is used but in these three places (as I find)

I find) in all the New Teſtament, and in each of them it ſignifies in the ſenſe aforementioned.

The *Italians* make the name to be a name of reproach among them, and do uſually abuſe the word Chriſtian, to ſignifie a fool. *Fulk. Not. on Rhem. Teſt.*

But if, as the Apoſtle ſaith, *the Preaching of Chriſt* is to the world *foolishneſs*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 18. it is no wonder that the Diſciples of Chriſt are to then the world *fools*.

Yet it is true (in a ſound ſenſe) ſo they are: For the whole of godlineſs is a Myſtery, 1 *Tim.* 3 16.

A man muſt *die*, that would *live*; he muſt be *empty*, that would be *full*; he muſt be *loſt*, that would be *found*; he muſt *have nothing*, that would *have all things*; he muſt *be blind*, that would *have illumination*; he muſt be *condemned*, that would have *redemption*; ſo he muſt be a *fool*, that would be a *Chriſtian*. *If any man among you ſeems to be wiſe, let him become a fool, that he may be wiſe.* 1 *Cor.* 3. 18.

He is the true Chriſtian that is the worlds fool, but wiſe to ſalvation.

Thus you have the ſenſe and meaning of the words briefly explained.

The Text needs no diviſion, and yet it is pity, the *almoſt* ſhould not be divided from the *Chriſtian*.

Though it is of little avail to divide them as they are linked in the Text, unleſs I could divide them as they are united in your hearts, this would be a bleſſed diviſion, if the *almoſt* might be taken from the *Chriſtian*: That ſo you may not

be

be only ἐν ὀλίγῳ, but ἐν πολλῷ, not only *propemodum*, but *admodum*; not only almost, but altogether Christians.

This is Gods work to effect it; but it is our duty to perswade to it: and, *O* that God would help me to menage this subject so that you may say in the conclusion. Thou perswadest me (not almost but) altogether to be a Christian.

The observation that I shall propound to handle, is this.

Doctrine. There are very many in the world, that are almost, and yet but almost Christians: many that are near heaven, and yet are never the nearer: many that are within a little of salvation, and yet shall never enjoy the least salvation: they are within sight of heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God.

There are two sad expressions in Scripture, which I cannot but take notice of in this place. *The one is concerning the truly righteous. The other is concerning the seemingly righteous.*

It is said to the truly righteous, he shall *scarcely be saved*, 1 Pet. 4. 18. and it is said of the seemingly righteous, he shall be *almost saved. Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, Mark. 12 24.

The righteous shall be saved with a *scarcely*; that is, though much difficulty: he shall go to heaven through many sad fears of hell.

The hypocrit shal be saved with an *almost*; that is, he shal go to hell through many fair hopes of heaven. *Quod vix fit fit*; *quod fere non fit.*

There are two things arise from hence, of very serious meditation. The one is, how oft a believer may miscarry, how low he may fall, and

and yet have true graces. The other is, how far an hypocrit may go in the *way* to *heaven*, how *high* he may attain, and yet have no grace.

The Saint may be cast down very near to hell, and yet shall never come there; and the hypocrit may be lifted up very near to heaven, and yet never come there.

The Saint may almost perish. and yet be saved eternally; the hypocrit may almost be saved, and yet perish finally. For the Saint at worst is really a believer, and the hypocrit at best is really a sinner.

Before I handle the *Doctrine*, I must premise three things which are of great use for the establishing of weak believers, that they may not be shaken and discouraged by this Doctrine.

First, There is nothing in the doctrine that should be matter of stumbling or discouragement to weak Christians.

The Gospel doth not speak these things to wound believers, but to awaken sinners and formal professors.

As there are none more averse then weak believers, to apply the promises and comforts of the Gospel to themselves, for whom they are properly designed: So there are none more ready then they to apply the threats and severest things of the Word to themselves, for whom they were never intended.

As the Disciples, when Christ told them, *One of you shall betray me, Matth.* 26. 15. they that were innocent, suspected themselves most, and therefore cry out, *Master, Is it I?*

So weak Christians, when they hear sinners re-

reproved, or the hypocrit laid open in the *Miniſtery* of the Word, they preſently cry out, *Is it I?*

It is the hypocrits fault to ſit under the trials and diſcoveries of the Word, and yet not to mind them.

And it is the weak Chriſtians fault to draw ſad concluſions of their own ſtate from premiſes which nothing concern them.

There is indeed great uſe of ſuch Doctrine as this is, to all believers.

1. To make them look to their ſtanding, upon what bottom they are, and to ſee that the foundation of their hope be well laid, that they build not upon the ſand, but upon a rock, *Matth.* 7. 24. 26.

2. It helps to raiſe our admiration of the diſtinguiſhing-love of God, in bringing us into the way everlaſting, when ſo many periſh from the way; and in over-powring our ſouls into a true converſion, when ſo many take up with a graceleſs profeſſion, *Pſal.* 139. 24.

3. It incites to that excellent duty of heart-ſearching, that ſo we approve our ſelves to God in ſincerity, 1 *Cor.* 13. 5.

4. It engages the ſoul in double diligence, that it may be found not only believing, but perſevering in faith to the end.

Theſe duties (and ſuch as theſe are) make this Doctrine of uſe to all believers; but they ought not make uſe of it as a ſtumbling block in the way of their peace and comfort.

My deſign in preaching on this ſubject, is not to make ſad the ſouls of thoſe whom Chriſt will not have made ſad; I would bring water not to

quench

quench the flax that is smoaking, *Matth.* 12. 20. but to put out that false fire that is of the sinners *own kindling*, lest walking all his days by the light thereof, he shall at last *ly down in sorrow*, *Isa.* 50. 1.

My aim is to level the mountain of the sinners confidence, not to weaken the hand of the believers faith and dependance; to awaken and bring in secure formal sinners, not to discourage weak believers.

Secondly, I would premise this: though many may go far (very far) in the way to heaven, and yet fall short: yet that soul that hath the least true grace, shall never fall short. *The righteous shall hold on his way*, *Job* 17. 9.

Though some may do very much in away of duty (as I shall show hereafter) and yet miscarry; yet that soul that doth duty with the least sincerity, shall never miscarry: *For he saveth the upright in heart*, *Psal.* 7. 10.

The least measure of true grace is as saving as the greatest: it saves as surely, though not so comfortably. The least grace gives a full interest in the blood of Christ, whereby we are throughly purged; and it gives a full interest in the strength and power of Christ, whereby we shall be certainly preserved.

Christ keeps faith in the soul, and faith keeps the soul in Christ, and so *we are kept by the power of God, through faith, to salvation*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 6.

Thirdly, I would promise this: They that can hear such truths as this, without serious reflection, and self-examination, I must suspect the goodness of their condition.

You will suspect that man to be next door to

an

a bankrupt, that never caſts up his ſhop, nor looks over his books: and I as verily think that man an hypocrit, that never ſearches nor deals with his own heart.

He that goes on in a road of duties without any rub or doubting of his ſtate, I doubt no mans ſtate more then his.

When we ſee a man ſick, and yet not ſenſible, we conclud, the tokens of death are upon him.

So when ſinners have no ſenſe of their ſpiritual condition, it is plain that they are dead in ſin, the tokens of eternal death are upon them.

Theſe things being premiſed (which I deſire you would carry along in your mind while we travel through this ſubject) I come to ſpeak to the propoſition more diſtinctly and cloſely.

Doctrine. That there at very many in the world that are almoſt, and yet but almoſt Chriſtians.

I ſhall demonſtrat the truth of the propoſition, and then proceed to a more diſtinct proſecution.

1. I ſhall demonſtrat the truth of the propoſition, & I ſhall do it by Scripture evidence, which ſpeaks plain and fully to the caſe.

1. The young man in the Goſpel is an eminent proof of this truth, in *Matt.* 19. 16. *to* 23. There you read of one that came to Chriſt, to learn of him the way to heaven: *Good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Our Lord Chriſt tells him. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments* and when Chriſt tells him which, he anſwers, *Lord, all theſe have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? verſ.* 17. 20.

Now

Now do but ſee how far this man went.

1. *He obeyed.*] He did not only hear the Commands of God; but he kept them: now the Scripture ſaith, *Bleſſed is he that hears the Word of God, and keeps it, Luke* 11.8.

2. *He obeyed univerſally*] not this or that command, but both this and that: he did not half it with God, or pick and chooſe which were eaſieſt to be done, and leave the reſt: no, but he obeys all, *all theſe things have I kept.*

3. *He obeyed conſtantly*] not in a fit of zeal only, but in a continual ſeries of duty: his goodneſs was not (as *Ephraims, Hoſ.* 6. 4.) *like the morning dew, that paſſeth away*: no, *all theſe things have I kept from my youth up.*

4. *He profeſſeth his deſire to know and do more*] *to perfect that which was lacking of his obedience*: and therefore he goes to Chriſt to inſtruct him in his duty; *Maſter, what lack I yet?* Now, would you not think this a good man? Alace, how few go thus far?

And yet as far as he went, he went not far enough: *He was almoſt, and yet but almoſt a Chriſtian*: for he was an unſound hypocrit: he forſakes Chriſts at laſt, and cleaves to his luſt, *v.* 21.

This then is a full proof of the truth of the doctrine.

A ſecond proof of it, is that of the parable of the Virgins, *Matt.* 25. 1 and ſoon.

See what a progreſs they make, how far they go in a profeſſion of Chriſt.

1. *They are called Virgins.* Now this is a name given in the Scripture, both in the Old Teſtament and New to the Saints of Chriſt, *Pſ.* 45. 11. 1 *Cor.* 11. 2. 3. *The Virgins love thee,*

Cant. 1. 3. So *Rev.* 14. 4. the one hundred and forty four thousand, that stood with the Lamb on Mount *Sion*, are called *Virgins*. They are called *Virgins*, because they are not defiled with *the corruptions that are in the world through lust*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 4. *Matt.* 25. 1.

Now these here seem to be of that sort, for they are called *Virgins*.

2. *They take their lamps*] that is, they made a profession of Christ.

3. *They had some kind of oyl in their lamps*] as appears, *v.* 8. They had some convictions, and some faith (though not the faith of Gods elect) to keep their profession alive, to keep the lamp burning. *Hi sunt non qualescunque animæ, sed tales quæ habent catholicam fidem, & habere videntur bona opera in Ecclesia Dei, Aug. de ser. Dom. ser.* 13.

4. *They went*] their profession was not an idle profession, they did perform duties, frequent ordinances, and do many things commanded; they made a progress, *they went*.

5. *They went forth*] they went and outwent, they left many behind them; this speaks out their separation from the world.

6. *They went with the wise Virgins*] they joyned themselves to those who had joyned themselves to the Lord, and were the companions of them that were the companions of Christ.

7. *They go forth to meet the Bridegroom*] *Cant.* 1. 7. this speaks out their owning and seeking after Christ.

8. When they heard the cry of the Bridegroom coming, *they arose, and trimmed their lamps*,

verse 7. they profess Christ more highly, hoping now to go in with the Bridegroom.

9. *They sought for true grace*] now, do not we say, the desires of grace, are grace? and so they are, if true and timely, if found and seasonable.

Why? lo here a desire of grace in these Virgins, *give us of your oyl.*

It was a desire of true grace, but it was not a true desire of grace; it was not true, because not timely, unsound, as being unseasonable; it was too late, *verse* 8.

Their folly was in not taking oyl, when they took their lamps; their time of seeking grace was when they came to Christ, it was too late too seek it when Christ came to them. They should have sought for that when they took up their profession; it was too late to seek it at the coming of the Bridegroom.

And therefore *they were shut out, verse* 10. and though they cry for entrance, *Lord, Lord, open to us, verse* 11. yet the Lord Christ tells them, *I know you not, verse* 12.

You see how far these Virgins go in a profession of Jesus Christ, and how long they continue in it, even till the Bridegroom came; they go to the very doors of heaven, and there (like the *Sodomites*) perish with their hands upon the very tresholds of glory.

They were *almost Christians*, and yet but *almost*: Almost saved, and yet perish.

You that are professors of the Gospel of Christ, stand and tremble: if they that have gone beyond us fall short of heaven, what shall become of us that fall short of them?

If they that are Virgins, that profess Christ,

that have some faith in their profession, (such as it is) that have some fruit in their faith, that outstrip others, that seek Christ, that improve their profession, and suite themselves to their profession; nay, that seek grace, if such as these be but *almost Christians*, Lord, what then we are?

If these two witnesses be not sufficient to prove the truth, and confirm the credit of the proposition: Take a third, and that shall be from the Old Testament, *Isa.* 58. 2. See what God saith of that people: he gives them a very high caracter for a choise people, one would think.

They seek me dayly, they delight to know my way, as a Nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching to God.

See how far these went: if God had not said they were rotten and unsound, we should have taken them for the *hee-goats before the flock*, *Jer.* 50. 8. and ranked them among the Worthies: pray observe,

1. *They seek God.*] Now this is the proper character of a true Saint, to seek God. True Saints are called seekers of God: *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob*, or, O God of *Jacob*, *Psal.* 24 6.

Lo here a generation of them that seek God, and are not these the Saints of God? Nay farther.

2. *They seek him dayly.*] Here is diligence backed with continuance, *day by day*: that is, every day, from day to day. They did not seek him by fits and girds, nor in a time of trouble and affliction only, as many do.

Lord, in trouble have they viſited thee, they powred out a prayer when thy chaſtening was upon them, Iſa. 26. 16. Many when God viſits them, then they viſit him, but not till then: when God powreth out his afflictions, then they powr out their ſupplications. This is ſea-mens devotion; when the ſtorms have brought them *to their wits end, then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, Pſal.* 107. 27. 28. *Jon.* 1. 5. Many never cry to God till they are at their wits end: they never come to God for help, ſo long as they can help themſelves.

But now theſe here whom God ſpeaks of, are more zealous in their *devotion*; the others make a vertue of neceſsity, but theſe ſeem to make conſcience of duty; for ſaith God, *They ſeek me dayly.*

Sure this is (one would think) a note of ſincerity.

Job ſaith of the hypocrit, *Will he alwayes call upon God?* *Job* 27. 10. Surely no, but now his people call upon God always, *They ſeek him daily*, certainly theſe are no hypocrits.

3. Saith God, *They delight to know my ways.*] Sure this frees them from the ſuſpicion of hypocriſie; for *Job* 21. 14. *They ſay unto God, depart from us, we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

4. *They as a Nation that did righteouſneſs.*] Not only as a Nation that ſpake righteouſneſs, or knew righteouſneſs, or profeſſed righteouſneſs, but as a Nation that did righteouſneſs, that practiſed nothing but what was juſt and right. They appeared to the judgement of the world as good as the beſt.

5. *They forſook not the ordinances of their God.*]

They seem true to their principles, constant to their profession, better then many among us, that cast off duties, and forsake the ordinances of God; but these hold out in their profession, *They forsook not the ordinances of God.*

They ask of me (saith God) *the ordinances of justice.*] They will not make their own will the rule of right and wrong, but the Law and will of God; and therefore in all their dealings with men, they desire to be guided and counselled by God. *They ask of me the ordinances of justice.*

7. *They take delight in approching to God.*] Sure this cannot be the guize of an hypocrit; *will he delight himself in the Almighty?* saith *Job* 27. 10. no he will not.

Through God is the chief delight of man, (having every thing in him to render him lovely, as was said of *Titus Vespasian*) *Delicia humani generis:* yet the hypocrit will not delight in God. *Hypocrita neque Deum neque divina habet in deliciis.*

Till the affections are made spiritual, there is no affections to things that are spiritual. God is a spiritual good, and therefore hypocrits cannot delight in God. But these are a people that delight in approaching to God.

8. They were a people that were much in fasting, as you may see, *v.* 3. *Wherefore have we fasted* (say they) *and thou seest not* - Now this is a duty that doth not suppose and require truth of grace only in the heart, but strength of grace.

No man (saith our Lord Christ) *puts new wine into old bottels, lest the bottels break, and the wine run out, Mat.* 9. 17.

New wine is strong, and old bottels weak; and the

ſtrong wine breaks the weak veſſel: this is a reaſon Chriſt gives why his Diſciples who were newly converted, (and but weak as yet) were not exerciſed with this auſtere diſcipline.

But this people here mentioned, were a people that faſted often, *afflicted their ſouls* much, wore themſelves out by frequent practices of humiliation *Aſſembl. Annot. upon the place.*

Sure therefore this *was new wine in new bottles*; this muſt neede be a *people* ſtrong in grace: here ſeems to be grace not only in truth, but alſo in growth. And yet for all this, they were no better then a generation of hypocrits: they made a goodly progreſs, and went far, but yet they went no far enough: they were caſt off by God after all I hope by this time the truth of the point is ſufficiently avouched and confirmed, that a man may be (yea very many are) *almoſt*, and yet (no more then) *but almoſt Chriſtians.*

Now for the more diſtinct proſecution of the point.

I ſhall ſhow you ſtep by ſtep, how far a man may go, what attainments he may reach unto, how ſpecious and ſingular a progreſs he may make in Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian when all is done.

2. *I will ſhow you whence it is, that many men go ſo far, as that they are almoſt Chriſtians.*

3. *What they are but almoſt Chriſtians, when they have gone thus far.*

4. *What the reaſon is, why men that go thus far as to be almoſt Chriſtians, yet go no further then to be almoſt* Chriſtians.

Queſt. I. *How far a man may go in the way to heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian?*

Answ. This I shall show you in twenty several steps.

1. *A man may have much knowledge, much light; he may know much of God and his will, much of Christ and his ways*, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

For though there can be no grace without knowledge, yet there may be much knowledge where there is no grace: illumination often goes before, when conversion never follows after. The subject of knowledge is the understanding, the subject of holiness is the will. Now a man may have his understanding enlightned, and yet his will not at all sanctified. He may have an understanding to know God, and yet want a will to obey God. The Apostle tells us of some, that *when they knew God, yet they glorified him not as God. Rom.* 1.21.

To make a man altogether a Christian, there must be light in the *head*, and heat in the *heart*, knowledge in the *understanding*, and zeal in the *affections.*

Some have zeal and no knowledge, that is blind devotion: some have knowledge and no zeal, that is fruitless speculation. But where knowledge is joyned with zeal, that makes a true Christian.

Object. But is it not said, *This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent? John* 17.3.

Solution. It is not every knowledge of God and Christ that interests the soul in life eternal. For why then do the devils perish? they have more knowledge of God then all the men in the world; for through by their fall they lost their holiness,

yet

yet they lost not their knowledge.

They are called Δαίμονες, from their knowledge: and yet they are Διαβολον, from their malice, Devils still.

Kowledge may fill the head, but it will never better the heart, if there be not somewhat else. The *Pharisees* had much knowledge; *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will &c. Rom.* 2 17.18. and yet they were a generation of hypocrits. *Sinite sapientes hujus mundi sapienter descendere ad infernum.*

Alace, how many have gone loaded with knowledge to hell?

Though it is true, that it is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ; yet is as true, that many do know God and Jesus Christ, that shall never see life eternal.

There is, you must know, a twofold knowledge, one is common, but not saving; the other is not common, but not saving: common knowledge is that which floats in the head, but doth not influence nor affect the heart. This knowledge reproboats may have: *Balaam saw Christ from the top of the rocks, and from the hills, Num.* 23.10.

Naturalist say, that there is a pearl in the toads head, and yet her belly is full of poyson. The *French* have a berry which they call *uve d'espine*, the grape of a thorn.

The common knowledge of Christ is the pearl in the toads heads: the grape that grows upon thorns, it may be found in men unsanctified.

And then there is a saving knowledge of God

and Chriſt, which doth includ the aſſent of the mind, and the conſent of the will: this is a knowledge that implyes faith: *By his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtifie many*, *Iſai.* 53,11.

And this is that knowledge which leads to eternal life. Now whatever the meaſure of knowledge is, which a man may have of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt, yet if be not this ſaving knowledge, knowledge joyned with affection & application, he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

He only knows God aright who knows how to obey him, and obeys according to his knowledge of him; *A good underſtanding have all they that do his commandments*, *Pſalm* 111. 10.

All knowledge without this, makes a man but like *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, with a *head of gold, and feet of clay.*

Some know, but to know.

Some know, to be known.

Some know, to practiſe what they know.

Now to know, but to know, that is curioſity.

To know, to be known, that is vain glory.

But to know, to practiſe what we know, that is Goſpel duty.

This makes a man a compleat Chriſtian; the other without this makes a man *almoſt*, and yet but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

2. *A man may have great & eminent gifts, yea ſpiritual gifts*, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian. The gift of prayer is a ſpiritual gift; now this a man may have, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, for the gift of prayer is one thing, the grace of prayer is another.

The

The gift of preaching and propheſying it a ſpiritual gift, 1 *Cor.* 12. 10. now this a man may have, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian. Judas* was a great Preacher, ſo were they that came to Chriſt, and ſaid, *Lord, Lord, we have propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name caſt out devils, &c. Matth.* 7. 22.

You muſt know, that it is not gifts, but grace, which makes a Chriſtian. For,

1. Gifts are from a common work of the Spirit, now a man may partake of all the common gifts of the Spirit, and yet be a reprobat; for therefore they are called common, becauſe they are indifferently diſpenſed by the Spirit to good and bad; to them that are believers, and to them that are not.

They that have grace, have gifts; and they that have no grace, may have the ſame gifts; for the Spirit works in both: nay, in this ſenſe, he that hath no grace may be under a greater work of the Spirit (*quo ad hoc*) as to this thing, then he that hath moſt grace: a graceleſs profeſſor may have greater gifts, then the moſt holy believer. He may out-pray, and out-preach, and out-do them; but they in ſincerity and integrity out-go him.

2. Gifts are for the uſe and good of others they are given, *in ordine ad alium*, as the School-men ſpeak, for the profiting and edifying of others; ſo ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 12. 7. *They are given to profit withal*, Eph. 4. 12. *Dona dantur in adjutorium gratiæ.*

Now a man may edifie another by his gifts and yet be unedified himſelf. He may be profitable

to another, and yet unprofitable to himſelf.

A lame man may with his crutch point to thee the right way, and yet not be able to walk in it himſelf: A crooked Taylor may make a ſute to fit a ſtraight body, though it fit not him that made it, becauſe of his crookedneſs.

The Church (Chriſts garden incloſed) may be watered through a wooden gutter; the Sun may give light through a fluttiſh window; and the field may be well ſowed with a dirty hand. The Raven was an unclean bird, yet God makes uſe of her to feed *Elijah*; though ſhe was not good meat, yet it was good meat ſhe brought, 1 *Kings* 17.6.

The efficacy of the Word doth not depend upon the authority of him that ſpeaks it, but upon the authority of the God that bleſſes it. So that another may be converted by my preaching, and yet I may be a *caſt-away* notwithſtanding. *Balaam* makes a clear and rare prophecie of Chriſt, and yet he hath no benefit by Chriſt; *There ſhall come a Star out of* Jacob, *and a Scepter ſhall riſe out of Iſrael.* But yet *Balaam* ſhal have no benefit by it; *I ſhal ſee him, but not now; I ſhal behold him, but not nigh*, *Numb.*24.17.

God may uſe a mans gift to bring another unto Chriſt; when he himſelf, whoſe gifts God uſed, may be a ſtranger unto Chriſt; one man may confirm another in the faith, and yet himſelf may be a ſtranger to the faith. *Pendleton* ſtrenghtens and confirms *Sanders*, in Queen *Maries* days; to ſtand in the truth he had preached, and to ſeal it with his blood; and yet afterwards plays the Apoſtat himſelf. *Acts and Mon. laſt Edit.* 3. *v. p.* 141.

Scul-

Scultetus tells us of one *Joannes Speiſerus*, a famous preacher of *Augsburg* in *Germany*, in the year 1523. who preached the Goſpel ſo powerfully, that divers common *harlots* were converted, and became good Chriſtians, and yet himſelf afterwards turned Papiſt, and came to a miſerable end. *Scultet. Annal. p.* 118.

Thus the candle may burn bright to light others in their work, and yet afterwards go out in a ſtink.

3. It is beyond the power of the greateſt gifts to change the heart; a man may preach like an Apoſtle, pray like an Angel, and yet may have the heart of a devil. It is grace only that can change the heart; the greateſt gifts cannot change it, but the leaſt grace can: gifts may make a man a Scholar, but grace makes a man a believer.

Now if gifts cannot change the heart, then a man may have the greateſt gifts, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

4. Many have gone loaden with gifts to hell: no doubt *Judas* had great gifts, for he was a preacher of the Goſpel; and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt would not ſet him in the work, and not fit him for the work; yet *Judas is gone to his own place*; *the Scribes and Phariſees* were men of great gifts, and yet *where is the wiſe? where is the Scribe?* 1 *Cor.* 1. 20. *The preaching of the Croſs is, to them that periſh, fooliſhneſs,* 1 *Cor.* 1. 18.

Them that periſh, who are they? who? the wiſe and the learned, both among *Jews* and *Greeks*; theſe are called *them that periſh. Surgunt indocti & rapiunt cœlum, dum nos cum doctrina noſtra in*

gehennam detrudimur, said a great Bishop, when he saw a poor shepherd weeping over a toad. The poor illiterat world attain to heaven, while we with all our learning fall into hell.

There are three things must be done for us, if ever we would avoid perishing.

We must be throughly convinced of sin.

We must be really united unto Christ.

We must be instated in the Covenant of grace.

Now the greatest gifts cannot stead us in any one of these.

They cannot work through convictions.

They cannot effect our union.

They cannot bring us into Covenant-relation.

And consequently they cannot preserve from eternal perishing: and if so then a man may have the greatest gifts, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

5. Gifts may decay and perish; they do not lye beyond the reach of corruption; indeed grace shal never perish, but gifts will; grace is incorruptible, though gifts are not: grace *is a spring, whose waters fail not, Isai.* 58. 11. but the streams of gifts may be dryed up. If grace be corruptible in its own nature, as being but a creature, yet it *is* incorruptible in regard of its conserver, as being the new creature: He that did creat it in us, will conserve it for us: He that did begin it, will also finish it, *Heb.* 12. 2.

Gifts have their root in nature, but grace hath its roots in Christ: and therefore though gifts may die and whither, yet grace shall abide for ever.

Now

Now if gifts are perishing, then (though he that hath the *least grace* is a Christian, yet) he that hath the *greatest gifts*, may be but *almost a Christian.*

Object. But doth not the Apostle bid us *covet earnestly the best gifts?* 1 *Cor.* 12. 31. Why must we covet them, and covet them earnestly, if they avail not to salvation?

Answ. Gifts are good, though they are not the best good; they are excellent, but there is some what more excellent; so it follows in the same verse, *yet I show unto you a more excellent way*, and that is the way of grace: one dram of grace is more worth then a talents of gifts. Gifts may make us rich towards men, but it is grace that makes us *rich towards God, Luke* 12. 21.

Our gifts profit others, but grace profits our selves: that whereby I profit another, is good; but that whereby I am profited my self, is better.

Now because gifts are good, therefore we ought to covet them: but because they are not the best good, therefore we ought not to rest in them: we must covet gifts for the good of others; that they may be edified; and we must covet grace for the good of our own souls, that they may be saved; for whosoever be bettered by our gifts, yet we shall miscarry without grace.

3. *A man may have a high profession of Religion be much in external duties of godliness, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Mark what our Lord Christ tells them in *Matt.* 7. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shal enter into the Kingdom of heaven*; that is, not every one that makes a pro-

profession of Christ, shal therefore be owned for a true Disciple of Christ, *All are not Israel, that are of Israel,* Rom 9.6. nor are all Christians that make a profession of Religion.

What a goodly profession had *Judas*? he followed Christ, left all for Christ, he preached the Gospel of Christ, he cast out Devils in the Name of Christ, he ate and drank at the Table of Christ; and yet *Judas* was but an hypocrit.

Most professors are like lillies, fair in show, but foul in scent; or like pepper, hot in the mouth, but cold in the stomach. The finest lace may be upon the coursest cloth.

It is a great deceit to measure the substance of our Religion, by the bulk of our profession, and to judge of the strength of our graces, by the length of our duties. The Scriptures speak of some, who having *a form of godliness, yet deny the power thereof,* 2 *Tim* 3.5. Deny the power, that is, they do not live in the practice of those graces which they pretend to in their duties: he that pretends to godliness by a spacious profession, and yet doth not practise godliness by a holy conversation, *he hath a form but denyes the power.*

Hugo compares such to the Ostrich, *qui alas habet, sed non volat,* which hath great wings, but yet flies not: many have the wings of a fair profession, but yet use them not to mount upward in spiritual affections, and a heavenly conversation. *Loquitur hic ut Piso, vivet ut Gallonius.*

But to clear the truth of this, that a man may make a high profession of Religion, and yet be but *almost a Christian*, take a four-fold evidence.

1. If

1. If a man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate bettered, then he may be a great profeſſor, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

But a man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate renewed.

He may be a conſtant hearer of the Word, and yet be a ſinner ſtill: he may come often to the Lords table, and yet go away a ſinner as he came; we muſt not think that duties, *ex opere operato*, can confer grace.

Many a ſoul hath been converted by Chriſt in an ordinance, but never was any ſoul converted by an ordinance without Chriſt.

And doth Chriſt convert all that ſit under the ordinances? ſurely no; for to ſome, *the word is a ſavor of death unto death*, 2 *Cor.* 2 16.

And if ſo, then it is plain, that a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

2. A man may profeſs Religion, and live in a form of godlineſs, in hypocriſie, *Iſa.* 48.1. *Hear ye this, O houſe of Jacob, which are called by the name of Iſrael and are come forth out of the waters of Judah which ſwear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Iſrael, but not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs.* What do ye think of theſe? *They make mention of the name of the Lord*; there is their profeſſion; *but not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs*, there is their diſſimulation: and indeed there could be no hypocriſie in a religious ſenſe, were it not for a profeſſion of Religion: for he that is wicked, and carnal, and vile inwardly, and appears to be ſo outwardly, he is no hypocrit, but

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is what he appears, and appears what he is.

But he that is one thing really, and another thing seemingly, is carnal and unholy, and yet seems to be good and holy, he is an hypocrit. *Hypocrita cupit videri justus.*

Thus the *Casuisti* define hypocrisie to be *simulatio sanctitatis*, a counterfeiting of holiness, and this fits exactly with the Greek word ὑποκριτὴς, which is from υποκρίνομαι, to counterfeit. *Tollet instit. Sacerd. lib. 8. c 9.*

And to this purpose, the Hebrews have two words for hypocrites, *Panim* which signifies *facies*, and *Chanephim*, which signifies *counterfeits*, from *Chanaph*, to dissemble, so that he is an hypocrit that dissembles Religion, and weareth the face of holiness, and yet is without the grace of holiness; he appears to be in semblance, what he is not in substance; he wears a form of godliness without, only as a cover of a prophane heart within.

He hath a *profession* that he may not be thought wicked, but it is but a *profession*, and therefore he is wicked.

He is the religious hypocrit. *Religious*, because he pretends to it; and yet an hypocrit, because he doth but pretend to it; he is like many men in a consumption, that have fresh looks, and yet rotten lungs: or like an apple that hath a skin fair, but a rotten coar; many appear righteous, who are only righteous in appearance.

And if so, then a man may profess Religion, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

3. Custom and fashion may creat a man a professor

fessor; as you have many that wear this or that garb, not because it keeps them warmer, or hath any excellency in it, more then another, but meerly for fashion.

Many must have powdered hair, spotted faces, feathers in their caps, *&c.* for no other end but because they would be fools in fashion.

So many profess Christianity, not because the means of grace warms the heart, or that they see any excellency in the wayes of God above the world, but meerly to follow the fashion; I wish I might not say, it hath been true of our days, because Religion hath been uppermost, therefore many have professed it; it hath been the gaining trade, and then most would be of that trade.

Religion in credit maks many professors, but few Proselytes; but when Religion suffers, then its confessors are no more then its converts; for custom makes the former, but conscience the latter.

He that is a professor of Religion meerly for custom-sake when it prospers, will never be a Martyr for Christs sake when Religion suffers.

He that owns the truth to live upon that, will disown it when it comes to live upon him.

They say, that when a house is decaying and falling, all the rats and mice will forsake it: while the house is firm, and they may shelter in the roof, they will stay, but no longer, lest in the decay, the fall should be upon them, and they that lived at top, should ly at bottom.

My brethren, may I not say we have many that are the vermin, the rats and mice of Religion, that

that would live under the roof of it, while they might have shelter in it; but when it suffers, forsake it, lest it should fall, and the fall should be upon them? I am perswaded this is not the least reason why God hath brought the wheel upon the profession of Religion, *viz.* to rid it of the vermin.

He shakes the foundation of the house, that these rats and mice may quite the roof; not to overturn it, but to rid them out of it, as the husbandman fans the wheat, that he may get rid of the chaff. The Halcion days of the Gospel provoke hypocrisie, but the sufferings for Religion prove sincerity.

Now then if custom and fashion make many men professors, then a man may profess Religion, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

4. If many may perish under a profession of godliness, then a man may profess Religion, *and yet be but almost a Christian.*

Now the Scripture is clear, that a man may perish under the highest profession of Religion. *Christ cursed the fig-tree that had leaves and no fruit.* It is said, *Matth* 8. 12. that *the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness.* Who were these, but they that were then the only people of God in the world, by profession, *that had made a Covenant with him by sacrifice*, and yet these cast out? *Psal.* 50. 5.

In *Matt.* 7. 22. you read of some that came and made boast of their profession to Christ, hoping that might save them; *Lord* (say they) *have we not prophesied in thy Name, cast out devils in thy Name, done may wonderful works in thy Name? Matth.* 7. 22.

Now

Now what saith our Lord Christ to this? *Then I will profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, verse* 23.

Mark, here are them that prophesie in his Name, and yet perish in his wrath; in his Name cast out devils, and then are cast out themselves; *in thy Name do many wonderful works*, and yet perish for wicked workers.

The profession of Religion, will no more keep a man from perishing, then calling a ship a *Safeguard*, or the *Good speed*, will keep her from drowning.

As many go to heaven with the fear of hell in their hearts, so many go to hell with the Name of Christ in their mouthes. Now then, if many may perish under a profession of godliness, then may a man be a high professor of Religion, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

Object. But it is not said by the Lord Christ himself, *He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven, Matth.* 10. 32.

Now for Christ to say, he will confess us before the Father, is equivalent to a promise of eternal life; for if Jesus Christ confess us, God the Father will never disown us.

Solution. True, they that confess Christ, shal be confessed by him: and it is as true that this confession is equivalent to a promise of salvation. But now you must know, that professing Christ, is not confessing him; for to profess Christ is one thing, to confess Christ is another: confession is a living testimony for Christ, in a time when Re-

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ligion suffers; profession may be only a lifeless formality, in a time when Religion prospers. To confess Christ, is to choose his ways, and own them; to profess Christ is to plead for his ways, and yet live beside them. Profession may be from a feigned love to the ways of Christ, but confession is from a rooted love to the person of Christ.

To profess Christ, is to own him when none deny him: to confess Christ, is to plead for him, and suffer for him, when others oppose him: hypocrits may be professors, but the Martyre are the true confessors: Profession is a *swimming* down the stream: Confession is a swimming against the stream. Now many may swim with the stream (like the dead fish), that cannot swim against the stream with the living fish: many may profess Christ, that cannot confess Christ, and so notwithstanding their profession, yet are but *almost Christians*.

4. To come yet nearer: *A man may go far in opposing his sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.* How far a man may go in this work, I shal show you in seven gradual instances.

First. *A man may be convinced of sin, and yet be but almost a Christian*: For,

1. Conviction may be rational as well as spiritual, it may be from a natural conscience enlightned by the Word, without the effectual work of the spirit, applying sin to the heart.

2. Convictions may be worn out; they many times go off, and end not in sound conversion; saith the Church, *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have brought forth wind*, Isa. 26. 18. This is the complaint of the Church, in reference to the unprofitableness of their affections, and it may be

the complaint of moſt, in reference to the unprofitableneſs of their convictions.

3. Many take convictions of ſin to be converſions from thence, and ſo ſit down and reſt in their conviction. That is a ſad complaint God makes of *Ephraim, Ephraim is an unwiſe ſon, for he ſhould not ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of children* Hoſ. 13. 13. Now then, if convictions may be only from natural conſcience, if they may be worn out, or may be miſtaken and reſted in for converſion, then man may have convictions and be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Secondly, *A man may mourn for ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; ſo did *Saul*, ſo did *Eſau*, Heb. 12. 16, 17. for the loſs of his birth-right, which was his ſin, and therefore he is called by the Spirit of God, *prophane Eſau*, yet he ſought it again carefully *with tears.*

Obj. But doth not Chriſt pronounce them bleſſed that mourn? *Matt.* 5. 4. *Bleſſed are they that mourn.*

Sure then if a man mourn for ſin, he is in a good condition: you ſee, ſaith *Nazianzen*, *Orat.* 17. τῷ στεναγμῷ τὴν σωτηρίαν συνεζευγμένην, that ſalvation is joyned with ſorrow,

Solution. I anſwer, It is true, that they who mourn for ſin in the ſenſe Chriſts there ſpeaks of, are bleſſed; but all mourning for ſin, doth not therefore render us bleſſed.

1. True mourning for ſin, muſt flow from ſpiritual conviction, of the evil, and vileneſs, and damnable nature of ſin.

Now all that mourn for ſin, do not do it from a through work of ſpiritual conviction upon the ſoul, they have not a right ſenſe of the evil and vileneſs of ſin.

2. True

True morning for sin, is more for the evil that is in sin, then the evil that comes by sin; more because it dishonors God, and wounds Christ, and grieves the Spirit, and makes the soul unlike God, then because it damns the soul.

Now there are many that mourn for sin not so much for the evil that is in it, as for the evil that it brings with it; there is mourning for sin in hell; you read of *weeping and wailing there*, *Matt.* 8.12. The damned are weeping and mourning to eternity, there is all sorrow, and no comfort: as in heaven there is peace without trouble, joy without mourning, so in hell there is trouble without peace, mourning without joy, weeping and wailing incessantly; but it is for the evil they feel by sin, and not for the evil that is in sin. So that a man may mourn for sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian*; it may grieve him to think of perishing for sin, when it doth not grieve him that he is defiled and polluted by sin.

Thirdly, *A man may make large confession of sin, to God, to others, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

How ingeniously doth *Saul* confess his sin to *David*, I *have sinned* (saith he) *thou are more righteous then* I: *Behold*, I *have played the fool, & have erred exceedingly*, 1 *Sam.* 24.17. & 26.27.

So *Judas* makes a full confession, I *have sinned in betraying innocent blood*, *Matth.* 27.4.

Yet *Saul* and *Judas* where both rejected of God; so that a man may confess sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Object. But is not confession of sin, a character of

of a child of God? Doth not the Apoſtle ſay; *If we confeſs our ſins, God is juſt and faithful to forgive them?* 1 *John* 1. 9. No man was ever kept out of heaven for his confeſſed badneſs, though many are kept out of heaven, for their ſuppoſed goodneſs. *Peccatorum confeſſio Synedoche univerſam pœnitentiam hoc loco ſignificat.* Vorſt. in loc.

Judah, in *Hebrew*, ſignifies *confeſſion*, now *Judah* got the Kingdom from *Ruben*; confeſſion of ſin is the way to the Kingdom of heaven.

Solution. There are ſome that confeſs ſin, and are ſaved; there are others that confeſs ſin, and periſh.

1. Many confeſs ſin meerly out of cuſtom, and not out of conſcience: you ſhal have many that will never pray, but they will make a long confeſſion of ſin, and yet never feel the weight or burden of it upon their conſciences.

2. Many will confeſs leſſer ſins, and yet conceal greater; like the patient in *Plutarch*, that complained to his Phyſician of his finger, when his liver was rotten.

3. Many will confeſs ſin in the general, or confeſs themſelves ſinners, and yet ſee little, and ſay leſs of their particular ſins: an implicit confeſſion (as one ſaith) is almoſt as bad as implicit faith.

Where confeſſion is right, it will be diſtinct eſpecially of thoſe ſins that were our chief ſins. So *David confeſſes his blood-guiltineſs, and adultery, Pſal.* 51. 4, 14. So *Paul* his *blaſphemy, perſecution, and injury againſt the Saints, 1 Tim.* 1. 13, 19. It is bad to hear men confeſs they are great ſinners, and yet cannot confeſs their ſins.

Though the leaſt ſin be too bad to be com-

mitted, yet there is no sin too bad to be confessed.

4. Many will confess sin, but it is only under extremity, that is not free and voluntary: *Pharaoh* confesses his sin, but it was when judgement compelled him, *I have sinned against the Lord*, saith he, but it was when he had had eight plagues upon him.

Many do by their sins, as mariners do by their goods, cast them out in a storm, wishing for them again in a calm: confession should come like water out of a spring, with runs freely, not like water out of a still which is forced by fire.

5. Many confess their sins, but with no intent to forsake sin; they confess the sins they have committed, but do not leave the sins they have *confessed*.

Many men use confession as *Lewis* the eleventh of *France* did his Crucifix; he would swear an oath, and then kiss it, and swear again, and then kiss it again.

So, many sin, and then confess they do not well but yet never strive to do better.

M. Torshel tells a story of a Minister he knew, that would be often drunk, and when he came into the Pulpit, would confess it very lamentingly; and yet no sooner was he out of the Pulpit, but he would be drunk again, and this would he do as constantly as men follow their trades.

Now then, if a man may confess sin meerly, out of custom; if he may confess lesser sins, and yet conceal greater; if he may confess sin only in the general, or only under extremity, or if he may confess sin without any intent to forsake sin, then surely a man may confess sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian*.

Fourth-

Fourthly, *A man may forſake ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; he may le his luſts and wicked wayes, which he ſometimes lived in; and in the judgement of the world become a new man, and yet not be a new creature. *Simon Magus* when he hears *Philip* preaching concerning the Kingdom of God, leaves his ſorcery and witchcraft, and believes, *Acts* 8. 13.

Object. But you will ſay, this ſeems contrary to Scripture; for that ſaith, *He that confeſſeth and forſaketh ſin, ſhal have mercy*, *Prov.* 28. 13 But I confeſs ſin, yea not only ſo, but I alſo forſake ſin; ſure therefore his mercy is my portion, it belongs to me.

It is true, that where the ſoul forſakes from a right principle, after a right manner, to a right end: where he forſakes ſin as ſin, as being contrary to God, and the purity of his nature. This declares that ſoul to be right with God, and the promiſe ſhal be made good to it, *He ſhal find mercy.*

But now, pray mind, there is a forſaking ſin that is not right, but unſound.

1. Open ſins may be deſerted, and yet ſecret ſins may be retained: now this is not a right forſaking, ſuch a ſoul ſhal never find mercy. A man may be cured of a wound in his fleſh, and yet may die of an impoſtume in his bowels.

2. A man may forſake ſin, but not as ſin: For he that forſakes ſin as ſin, forſakes all ſin. *A quatenus ad omne valet conſequentia.* It is impoſſible for a man to forſake ſin as ſin, unleſs he forſake all that he knows to be ſin.

3. A man may let one ſin go, to hold another the faſter: as a man that goes to ſea, would willingly ſave all his goods; but if the ſtorm ariſe

hat he cannot, then he throws ſome over board to lighten the veſſel, and ſave the reſt. So did they, *Acts* 27. 38.

So the ſinner chooſes to keep all his ſins; but if a ſtorm ariſe in his conſcience, why then he will heave one luſt over board to ſave the life of another.

4. A man may let all ſin go, and yet be ſinner ſtill; for there is the root of all ſin in the heart, though the fruit be not ſeen in the life: the three lives, though the boughs be lopt off.

As a man is a ſinner before ever he acts ſin, ſo (till grace renew him) he is a ſinner thogh the leaves ſin; for there is original ſin in him enough to damn & deſtroy him, *Pſ.* 51. 5.

5. Sin may be left, and yet beloved: a man may forſake the life of ſin, and yet retain the love of ſin: now though leaving ſin makes him *almoſt a Chriſtian*, yet loving ſin vows he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

It is a leſs evil to do ſin and not love it, then to love ſin and not to do it; for to do ſin may argue only weakneſs of *grace*, but to love ſin argues ſtrength of *luſt*: *What I hate, that do I, Rom.* 7. 15.

Sin is bad in any part of man, but ſin in the affection is worſe then ſin in the converſation: for ſin in the converſation may be only from infirmity; but ſin in the affection is the fruit of choice, and unregeneracy.

6. All ſin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed, and ſo the nature of the ſinner is the ſame as ever. A dog chained up, is a dog ſtill, as much as if it were looſe to devour.

7. There may be a ceſſation of arms between enemies, and yet the quarrel may remain on foot ſtill.

There

There may be a making truce, where there is no making peace.

A ſinner may lay the weapons of ſin out of his hand, and yet the enmity againſt God ſtill remain in his heart.

There may be a truce, he may not ſin againſt him; but there can be no peace till he be united unto him.

Reſtraining grace holds in the ſinner, but it is renewing grace that changes the nature. Now many are held in by grace from being open ſinners, that are not renewed by grace, and made true believers.

Now then, if a man may forſake open ſins, and retain ſecret ſins; if he may forſake ſin, but not as ſin; if he may let one ſin go, to hold another the faſter; if a man may let all ſin go, and yet be a ſinner ſtill: if ſin may be left, and yet beloved. Finally, if all ſin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed, then a man may forſake ſin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Fifthly, *A man may hate ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* *Abſalom* hated *Amnons* uncleanneſs with his ſiſter *Thamas*; yea his hatred was ſo great, as that he ſlew him for it, and yet *Abſalom* was but a wicked man.

Object. But the Scripture makes it a ſign of a gracious heart to hate ſin; yea, though a man do through infirmity fall into ſin, yet if he hates it, this is a proof of grace. *Paul* proves the ſincerity of his heart, and the truth of his grace, by this hatred of ſin, though he committed it, *Rom.*7.15. *What I hate, that I do,*

Nay, what is a grace, but *conformitas cum archetypo*, a conformity of the ſoul to God, to love as

God loves, to hate as God hates? Now God hates sin: it is one part of his holiness, to hate all sin.

Solut. And if I hate sin, then am I conformed to God: and if I am conformed to God, then am I altogether a Christian.

It is true, that there is a hatred of sin, which is a sign of grace, and which flows from a principle of grace, & is grace. As for instance: To hate sin, as it is an offence to God, a wrong to his Majesty: to hate sin, as it is a breach of the Command, and so a wicked controling Gods will, which is the only rule of goodness: to hate sin, as being a disingenuous transgression of that Law of love established in the blood and death of Christ, and so in a degree *a crucifying of Christ afresh*.

To hate sin, as being a grieving and quenching the Spirit of God, as all sin in its nature is. Thus to hate sin is grace; and thus every true Christian hates sin. But though every man that hath grace, hates sin; yet every man that hates sin hath not grace: For a man may hate sin from other principles, not as it is a wrong to God, or a wounding *Christ*, or a grieving the Spirit. for then he would hate all sin; for there is no sin but hath this in the nature of it: But,

1. A man may hate sin for the shame that attends it, more then for the evil that is in it. Some sinners there are who declare *their sin as Sodom, and hide it not*, Isa. 3. 9. They are set down in the *seat of the scornful*, Psal. 1. 1. *they glory in their shame*, Philip. 3. 19. But now others there are who are ashamed of sin, and therefore hate it, not for the sins sake, but the shames sake. This made *Absalom* hate *Amnons* uncleanness, because it

it brought ſhame upon him, and his ſiſter.

2. A man may hate ſin more in others then in himſelf; ſo doth the drunkard, he hates drunkenneſs in another, and yet practiſes it himſelf: the lier hates falſhood in another, but likes it in himſelf. Now he that hates ſin from a principle of grace, hates ſin moſt in himſelf; he hates ſin in others, but the loaths moſt the ſins of his own heart.

A man may hate one ſin, as being contrary to another: there is a great contrariety between ſin and ſin, between luſt and luſt: It is the excellency of the life of grace, that it is an uniform life: there is not one grace contrary to another: the graces of Gods Spirit are different, but not differing; faith and love, and holineſs are all allone; they conſiſt together at the ſame time, in the ſame ſubject; nay, they cannot be parted: there can be no faith without love, no love without holineſs: and ſo on the other hand, no holineſs without love, no love without faith. So that this makes the life grace an eaſie and excellent life: but now the life of ſin is a diſtracting contradictious life, wherein a man is a ſervant to contrary luſts: the luſt of pride and prodigality, is contrary to the luſt of covetouſneſs, *&c. Tit* 3.3.

Now when one luſts gets to be the maſter luſt in the ſoul, then that works a hatred of its contrary: where covetouſneſs gets the heart, there the heart hates pride: and where pride gets uppermoſt in the heart, there the heart hates covetouſneſs. Thus a man may hate ſin, nor from a principle of *grace*, but from the contrariety of *luſt*.

He doth not hate any ſin as it is ſin, but he hats it as being contrary to his beloved ſin.

Now then, if a man may hate ſin for the

shame that attends it, if he may hate sin more in others, then in himself; and if he may hate one sin as being contrary to another, then he may hate sin, & yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Sixthly, *A man may make great vows and promises, he may have strong purposes and resolutions against sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

Thus did *Saul*, he promises and resolves against his sin, *Return, my son David*, saith he, *for I will no more do thee harm*, 1 *Sam.* 16. 21. What promises & resolves did *Pharaoh* make against that sin of detaining Gods people? Saith he, *I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice to the Lord*, *Exod* 8. 8. And again, *I will let you go, and ye shal stay no longer*, *Exod.* 9. 28. And yet *Saul* and *Pharaoh* both perished in their sins. The greatest purposes and promises against sin, will not make a man a Christian: For,

1. Purposes and promises against sin, never hurt sin: we say, *threatned folk live long*; and truly so do threatned sins. It is not new purposes, but a new nature, that must help us against sin: purposes may bring to the birth, but without a new nature, *there is no strength to bring forth.* The new nature is the best soil for holy purposes to grow in, otherwise they wither and die, like plants in an improper soil.

2. Trouble and afflictions may provoke us to large purposes and promises against sin for the future: what more common then to vow, and not to pay: to make vows in the day of trouble, which we make no conscience to pay in the day of peace? Many covenant against sin when trouble is upon them, and then sin against their covenant, when it is removed from them.

It was a brave rule that *Pliny* in one of his Epiſtles, gave his friend to live by: *Ut tales eſſe perſeveremus ſani, quales nos futuros eſſe profitemur infirmi. That we ſhould continue to be ſuch when we are well, as we promiſe to be when we are ſick.*

Many are our ſick-bed promiſes; but we are no ſooner well, but we grow ſick of our promiſes.

3. Purpoſes and reſolves againſt ſin for the future, may be only a temptation to put off repentance for the preſent: Satan may put a man on to good purpoſes, to keep him from preſent attempts. He knows whatever we purpoſe, yet the ſtrength of performance is not in our ſelves. He knows that purpoſes for the future, are a putting God off for the preſent: they are a ſecret *will not*, to a preſent opportunity. That is a notable paſſage, *Luke* 5.59. *Follow me*, ſaith Chriſt to the two men: Now ſee what anſwers they give to Chriſt, *Suffer me firſt to go bury my father*, ſaith one: this man purpoſes to follow Chriſt, only he would ſtay to bury his father. Saith the other, *Lord, I will follow thee, but let me firſt go and bid them farewell which are at my houſe, verſ.* 61. I will follow thee, but only I would firſt go and take my leave of my friends, or ſet my houſe in order; and yet we do not find that ever they followed Chriſt, notwithſtanding their fair purpoſes.

4. Nature unſanctified may be ſo far wrought on, as to make great promiſes and purpoſes againſt ſin.

1. A natural man may have great convictions of ſin, from the workings of an enlightened conſcience.

2. He may approve of the Law of God.

3. He may have a deſire to be ſaved.

Now theſe three together, The workings of conſcience; ſight of the goodneſs of the Law; A deſire to be ſaved, may bring forth in a man great purpoſes againſt ſin, and yet he may have no heart to perform his own purpoſes. This was much-what the caſe of them, *Deut.* 5.27. ſay they to *Moſes*, *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God ſhal ſay, and tell thou it to us, and we will hear it, and do it.*

This is a fair promiſe, and ſo God takes it, *verſe* 28. *I have heard the words of this people, they have well ſaid all that they have ſpoken.* So ſaid, and ſo done, had been well, but it was better ſaid then done; for though they had a tongue to promiſe, yet they had no heart to perform; and this God ſaw, therefore ſaid he, *verſe* 29. *O that there were ſuch a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my Commandments always, that it might be well with them!*

They promiſe to fear God and keep his Commandments, but they wanted a new heart to perform what an unſanctified heart had promiſed. It fares with men in this caſe, as it did with that ſon in the Goſpel, that ſaid, *He would go into the vineyard, but went not, Matth.* 21.30.

Now then, if purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin; if preſent afflictions may draw out large *promiſes*; if they may be the fruit of *temptation*, or if from nature unſanctified ſurely then a man may promiſe and purpoſe much againſt ſin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Seventhly, *A man may maintain a ſtriſe and combat againſt ſin in himſelf, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* So did *Balaam*, when he went to curſe the people of God, he had a great ſtrife within

within himſelf; *How ſhall I curſe* (ſaith he) *where God hath not curſed? Or how ſhall I deſie, whom the Lord hath not defied?* Num. 23 8.

And did not *Pilat* ſtrive againſt his ſin, when he ſaid to the *Jews*, *Shall I crucifie your King? What evil hath he done? I am innocent of the blood of this juſt man*; *Mark* 15.12, 14. *Matt.* 27.24.

Object. But you will ſay, *Is not this an argument of grace, when there is a ſtriving in the ſoul againſt ſin? For what ſhould oppoſe ſin in the heart but grace?* The Apoſtle makes *the luſting of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh Gal.* 5. 17. to be an argument of grace in the heart. Now I find this ſtrife in my heart, though the remainders of corruption ſometimes break out into actual ſins, yet I find a ſtriving in my ſoul againſt ſin.

Solut. It is true, there is a ſtriving againſt ſin which is only from grace, and is proper to believers; and there is a ſtriving againſt ſin, which is not from grace, and therefore may be in them that are not believers.

There is a ſtrife againſt ſin in one and the ſame faculty; the will againſt the will; the affection againſt the affection, and this is that which the Apoſtle calls, *the luſting of the fleſh, againſt the ſpirit*; that is, the ſtriving of the unregenerat part againſt the regenerat; and this is ever in the ſame faculty, and is proper to believers only.

An unbeliever never finds this ſtrife in himſelf; this ſtrife cannot be in him; it is impoſſible (as ſuch) that is, while he is on this ſide a ſtate of grace.

But then there is a ſtriving againſt ſin in divers faculties, and this is the ſtrife that is in them that

are not believers: there the strife is between the will and the conscience: conscience enlightened and terrified with the fear of hell and damnation, that is against sin; the will and affection (not being renewed) they are for sin. And this causes great tuggings and strong combats many times in the sinners heart. ---- *Video meliora proboque Deteriora sequor.*----

Thus it was with the Scribes and Pharisees; conscience convinced them of the Divinity of Christ, and of the truth of his being the Son of God; and yet a perverse will, and carnal affections cry out, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him.*

Conscience pleaded for him, he had a witness in their bosoms, and yet their wills were bent against him, and therefore they are said *to have resisted the spirit*; to wit, the workings and convictions of the spirit in their consciences, *Acts* 7. 51. And this is the case of many sinners, when will and affections are for sin, and plead for it; conscience is against it, and many times frights the soul from the doing of it.

And hence men take that which opposes sin in them, to be grace, when it is only the work of a natural conscience, they conclud the strife is between grace and sin, the regenerat, and unregenerat part; when, alace! it is no other then the contention of a natural conscience against a corrupt wil & affection.

And if so, then a man may have great strifes and combats against sin in him, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

5. *A man may desire grace, and yet be but almost a Christian*, so did *the five foolish Virgins*, *Matth.* 25. 8. *Give us your oyl*; what was that but true

grace? it was that oyl that lighted the wise Virgins into the Bridegrooms chamber

They do not only desire to enter in, but they desire oyl to light them in: wicked men may desire heaven, desire a Christ to save them; there is none so wicked upon earth, but desire to be happy in heaven. But now here are they that desire grace as well as glory, and yet these are but *almost a Christians.*

Object. But is it not commonly taught, *that desires of grace, are grace?* Nay, doth not our Lord Christ himself make it so? *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled, Matth. 5. 6.*

Solut. It is true, that there are some desires of grace, which are grace: As

1. When a man desires grace from a right sense of his natural state, when he sees the vileness of sin, and the woful, defiled, and loathsom condition he is in, by reason of sin, and therefore desires the grace of Christ to renew and change him: this is grace. This some make to be the lowest degree of saving Faith.

2. When a man joyns proportionable endeavors to his desires, doth not only wish for grace, but work for grace, such desires are grace.

3. When a mans desires are constant and uncessant that cease not but in the attainment of their object, such desires are true grace. They are a part of the especial work of the Spirit. They do really partake of the nature of grace, now it is a known maxime, *Quicquid participat de natura totius, est pars totius. That which partakes of the nature of the whole, is a part of the whole:* The fillings of gold, are gold. The sea is not more really water

then the least drop: the flame is not morally water then the least drop: the flame is not more really fire then the least spark; for these do *participare de natura totius.*

But though all true desires of grace, are grace; yet all desires of grace are not true: For;

1. A man may desire grace, but not for it self, but for somewhat else; not grace for graces sake, but for heavens sake; He doth not desire grace, that is nature may be changed, his heart renewed, the Image of God stampt upon him, and his lusts subdued in him.

These blessed desires are found only in true believers. The true Christian only can desire grace for graces sake; but the almost Christian may desire grace for heavens sake.

2. A man may desire grace without proportionable endeavors after grace: many are good at wishing, bad at working; like him that lay in the grass on a Summers day, crying out, *O si hoc esse laborare. O that this were to work.*

Solomon saith, *The desire of the sloathful kills him.* How so? *For his hands refuse to labor, Prov.* 21.25. He perisheth in his desires. *Virtutem ut videant contabescántque relicta. Pers.*

The believer joyns desires and endeavors together: *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after, Psal.* 27. 4.

3. A mans desires of grace may be unseasonable; thus the *foolish Virgins* desired oyl when it was too late. *Impii non curant quærere quem tamen desiderant invenire, cupientes consequi, sed non & sequi. Bern.*

The believers desires are seasonable: he desires grace in the season of grace, and seeks in a time when

when it may be found. *The wise mans heart knows both time and judgement, Eccl.8* He knows his season, and hath wisdom to improve it.

The silly sinner doth all his works out of season: he sins away the seasons of grace, and then desires grace when the season is over: The sinner doth all too late, as *Esau* desired the blessing when it was too late, and therefore he lost it; whereas, had he come sooner, he had obtained it. *Sero sapiunt Phryges.*

Most men are like *Epimetheus*, wise too late: they come when the market is done: when God hath shut in shop, then they have oyl to get. When they ly upon their death-beds, then they desire holy hearts.

4. Desires of grace in many are very inconstant and fleeting, like the *morning dew that quickly passes away, Hos.6 4.* Or like *Jonahs gourd*, that springs up in a night, & withers in a night, *Jon. 4. 6. 7.* they have no root in the heart, and therefore quickly perish: Now then, if a man may desire grace, but not for graces sake, if desires may be without endeavors, if a man may desire grace when it is too late, if these desires may be but fleeting and inconstant, then may a man desire grace, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

6. *A man may tremble at the Word of God, and yet be but almost a Christian*, as *Belshazzar* did at the hand-writing upon the wall, *Dan. 5.6.*

Object. But is not that a note of sincerity and truth of grace, to tremble at the Word? Doth not God say, *To him will I look that is of a poor & contrit spirit, at trembles at my Word? Isa. 66. 2.*

Solut. There is a twofold trembling.

1. One

1. One is, when the Word discovers the guilt of sin, and the wrath of God that belongs to that guilt; this, where conscience is awake, causes trembling and amazement: thus when *Paul preached of righteousness and judgement*, it is said, *Felix trembled*, *Acts* 24. 25.

2. There is a trembling which arises from a holy dread and reverence of the Majesty of God speaking in his Word: this is only found in true believers, and is that which keeps the soul low in its own eyes. Therefore mark how the words run in *Isai.* 66. 2. *To him will I look that is of a poor and contrit spirit, and trembles at my Word.*

God doth not make the promise to him that trembles at the Word; *For the Devils believe, and tremble*, *James* 2. 19. The Word of God can make the proudest and stoutest sinner in the world to shake and tremble; but it is *to the poor and contrit in spirit that trembles.* Where trembling is the fruit of a spirit broken for sin, and low in its own eyes, there will God look.

Now many tremble at the Word, but not from poverty of spirit, not from a heart broken for sin, and low in its own eyes, not from a sense of the Majesty and holiness of God, and therefore notwithstanding they tremble at the Word, yet they are *but almost Christians.*

7. *A man may delight in the Word and Ordinances of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* *Isai.* 58. 2. *They take delight in approaching to God.* And it is said of that ground, *Matt.* 13. 20. that it *received the Word with joy*; and yet it was but stony ground.

Object. But is it not made a character of a godly man, or delight in the Word of God? Doth not

Da-

David ſay, *He is a bleſſed man that delights in the Law of the Lord? Pſal.* 1. 2.

Solut. There is a delighting in the Word, which flows from grace, and is a proof of bleſſedneſs.

1. He that delight in the Word, becauſe it is ſpiritual, he is a Chriſtian indeed: the more ſpiritual the ordinances are, the more doth a gracious heart delight in them.

2. When the Word comes cloſe to the conſcience, rips up the heart, and diſcovers ſin, and yet the ſouls delights in it notwithſtanding, this is a ſign of *grace.*

3. When delight ariſes from that communion that is to be had with God there; this is from a principle of grace in the ſoul.

But there may be a delight in the Word, where there is no grace.

1. There are many delight in the Word, becauſe of the eloquence of the preacher: they delight not ſo much in the truths delivered, as in the dreſs they are delivered in. Thus it is ſaid of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he was to them *as a very lovely ſong of one that hath a pleaſant voice*, *Ezek.* 33. 32.

There are very many delight to hear the Word that yet take no delight to do it; ſo ſaith God of them, in *Ezek.* 33. 32. *They delight to hear my words, but they do them not.*

Now then, if a man may delight in the Word, more becauſe of the eloquence of the preacher, then becauſe of the ſpiritualneſs of the matter: if he may delight to hear the Word, and yet not delight to do it, then he may delight in the Word, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

8. *A man may be a member of the Church of Chriſt*

Chriſt, he may joyn himſelf to the people of God, partake with them in all ordinances. and ſhare of all Church priviledges, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

So the *five fooliſh Virgins* joyned themſelves to the wiſe, and walked together.

Many may be members of the Church of Chriſt, and yet not members of *Chriſt* the Head of the Church.

There was a mixed multitude came up with the Church of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, they joyned themſelves to the *Iſraelites*, owned their God, left their own Countrey, and yet in heart *Egyptians* notwithſtanding.

All are not Iſrael that are of Iſrael, Rom. 9. 6.

The Church in all ages hath had unſound members: *Cain* had communion with *Abel*; *Iſhmael* dwelt in the ſame houſe with *Iſaac*; *Judas* was in fellowſhip with the Apoſtles, and ſo was *Demas* with the reſt of the Diſciples.

There will be ſome bran in the fineſt meal; the draw-net of the Goſpel catches bad fiſhes as well as good; the tares and the wheat grow together, and it will be ſo till the harveſt.

God hath a Church where there are no members but ſuch as are true members of Chriſt, but it is in heaven; it is *the Church of the firſt born* Heb. 12. 23. there are no hypocrits, no rotten, unſound profeſſors, none but *the ſpirit of juſt men made perfect* Matt. 3. 18 all is pure wheat that God layeth up in that garner; there the chaff is ſeparated to unquenchable fire.

But in the Church on earth, the wheat and the chaff ly in the ſame heap together: the *Samaritans* will be near of kin to the *Jews* when they are in pro-

prosperity; for while the Church of God flowrisheth in the world, many will joyn to it, they wil seem *Jews*, though they are *Samaritans*; and seem Saints, though yet they are no better then *almost Christian*.

9. *A man may have great hopes of heaven, great hopes of being saved, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

Indeed there is a hope of heaven, which is *the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, Heb.* 6.19. it never miscarries, and it is known by four properties.

First, It is a hope which purifies the heart, purges out sin, 1 *John* 3.3. *He that hath this hope, purifies himself, even as God is pure.* That soul that truly hopes to enjoy God, truly endeavours to be like God.

Secondly, It is a hope which fills the heart with gladness: *We rejoyce in hope of the glory of God, Rom.* 5.2.

Thirdly, It is a hope that is founded upon the promise, *Psal.* 130.6. as there can be no true faith without a promise, so nor any true hope. Faith applyes the promise, and Hope expects the fulfilling the promise. Faith relyes upon the truth of it, and Hope waits for the good of it. Faith gives interest Hope expects livery and seisin.

Fourthly, It is a hope that is wrought by God himself in the soul; who is therefore called, *The God of hope*, *Rom.* 15.13. as being the *Author*, as well as the *Object* of hope. Now he that hath this hope shal never miscarry: This is a right hope, the hope of the true believer, *Christ in you the hope of glory, Col.* 1.26.

But then, as there is a true and sound hope, so there is a false and rotten hope; and this is much more common, as bastard pearls are more frequently worn then true pearls.

There

There is nothing more common then to see men big with groundless hopes of heaven: A man may have great hope, that hath no grace: you read of the hope of hypocrits, *Job* 8. 13,24.

The performance of duties *is a proof* of the hope; the foolish Virgins would never have done what they did, had they thought they should have been shut out after all.

Many professors would not be at such pains in duties as they are, if they did not hope for heaven. Hope is the great motive to action: despair cuts the sinews of all endeavors: this is one reason why the damned in hell cease acting toward an alteration of their state, because despair hath taken hold of them: if there were any hope in hell, they would up and be doing there. So that there may be great hopes where there is no grace. Experience proves this. Formal professors are men of no grace, but yet men of great hopes; nay, many times you shal find that none fear more about their eternal condition, then they that have most cause of joy; and none hope more, then they that have most cause of fear. As interest in God may sometimes be without hope, so hope in God may be without interest.

2. A man may hope in the mercy, and goodness, and power of God, without eying the promise, and this is the hope of most: God is full of mercy and goodness, & therefore willing to save: and he is infinit in power, and therefore able to save, why therefore should *I* not rest on him?

Now it is presumption, and therefore sin, to hope in the mercy of God, otherwise then by eying the promise: for the promise is the channel of mercy,

mercy, the pipe through which is conveyed: all the blessednes the Saints enjoy in heaven, is no other then what is the fruit of the promise relyed on, and hoped for there on earth. A man hath no warrant to hope in God, but by vertue of the promise.

3. A man may hope for heaven, and yet not cleanse his heart, nor depart from his secret sins: That hope of salvation that is not accompanied with heart purification, that is *a vain hope.*

4. A man may hope for heaven, and yet be doing the work of hell: He may hope for salvation, and yet be working out his own damnation, and so perish in his confidences. This is the case of many, *Male agendo sperant, & sperando pereunt:* like the water-man, that looks one way, and rows another: Many have their eyes on heaven, whose hearts are in the earth: they hope in God, but choose him not for a portion: they hope in God, but do not love him as the best good, and therefore are like to have no portion in him, nor good by him; but are like to perish without him, notwithstanding all their hopes, *Job* 27. 8. *What is the hope of the hypocrit, though he hath gained, when God takes away his soul?*

Now then, if a man may have great hope of heaven, that hath no grace; if he may hope in mercy, without eying the promise; if he may hope without heart-purifying; if he may hope for heaven, and yet do the work of hell; surely then a man may have great hopes of heaven, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

10. *A man may be under great and visible changes, and these wrought by the ministery of the Word, and yet be but almost a Christian,* as Herod was: it

is

is said, when *he heard John Baptist, he did many things, and he heard him gladly, Matt. 6. 20. Saul* was under a great change, when he met the Lords Prophets, he turned Prophet too.

Nay, it is said, *v. 9.* of that 1 *Sam. 10 that God gave him another heart.*

Now was not this a work of grace? And was not *Saul* here truly converted? One would think he was, but yet indeed he was not.

For though it is said, God gave him *another heart*, yet it is not said, that God gave him *a new heart.*

There is a great difference between (*lebb acher*) another heart, and (*lebb chadish*) a new heart; God gave him another heart to fit him for a Ruler, but gave him not a *new heart* to make him a believer: another heart may make another man; but it is a *new heart* that makes a *new man.*

Again, *Simon Magus* is a great proof of this truth, he was under a great and visible change; of a *sorcerer*, he was turned to a *believer*; he left his witchcrafts and sorceries, and imbraced the *Gospel*, was not this a great change?

If the drunkard doth but leave his drunkenness, the swearer his oaths, the prophane person his prophaneſs: they think this is a gracious change, and their state is now good: alace, *Simon Magus* did not only leave his sins, but had a kind of conversion; for *he believed and was baptized, Acts* 8. 13.

Object. But *is not that man that is changed a true Christian?*

Solut. Not every change makes a man a Christian, indeed there is a change, that whoever is under it, he is a true Christian.

When a mans heart is so changed, as that it is re-

renewed, when *old things are done away, and all is become new*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. when the καινὴ κτίσις, the new creature is wrought in the soul, when a man is *turned from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God*, Acts 26. 18. when the mind is enlightned, the will renewed, the affections made heavenly, then a man is a Christian indeed.

But now you must know that every change is not this change: For,

1. There is a civil change, a moral change, as well as a spiritual and supernatural change.

Many men are changed in a moral sense; and one may say, they are become *new men*, but they are in heart and nature the same men still. They are not changed in a spiritual and supernatural sense, and therefore it cannot be said of them, they are become *new creatures*.

Restraining grace may cause a moral change, but it is renewing grace that must cause a saving change. Now many are under restraining grace, and so changed morally, that are not under the power of renewing grace, and so changed savingly.

2. There is an outward change, as well as an inward change; the outward change is often without the inward, though the inward change is never without the outward. A mans heart cannot be sanctified, but it will influence the life; but a mans life may be reformed, and yet never effect or influence the heart.

3. A man may be converted from a course of prophaneſs to a form of godliness; from a filthy converſation, to a fair profeſſion, and yet the heart the same, in one and the other. A rotten poſt may be gilt without, and yet unſound within. *Hypocrita in verbis ſanctus, in corde vanus; intus*

Nero

Nero, fortis Cato. Audi, nemo melius; specta, nemo pejus.

It is common to have the outside of the cup and platter made clean, and yet the inside foul and filthy, *Matth.* 23. 25.

Now then, if a man may be changed morally, and yet not spiritually; outwardly, and yet not inwardly; from a course of prophaneſs, to a lifeleſs form of godlineſs; then a man may be under great & viſible changes, and yet be no more then *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

I do not ſpeak this to diſcountenance any change, ſhort of that that is ſpiritual; but to awaken you to ſeek after that change, which is more then moral. It is good to be outwardly reformed, but it is better to be ſavingly renewed.

I know how natural it is for men to take up with any thing like a work of converſion, though it be not converſion; and reſting in that, they eternally periſh.

Beloved, let me tell you, there is no change, no converſion can ſtead your ſouls in the day of Judgement, on this ſide that ſaving work, which is wrought on the ſoul by the Spirit of God renewing you throughout, 1 *Theſſ* 5. 23. The ſober man without this change, ſhal as ſurely go to hell as the beaſtly drunkard.

Morality and civility may commend us to men, but not to God. They are of no value in the procurement of an eternal ſalvation.

A man may go far in an outward change, and yet not be one ſtep nearer heaven, then he that never was under any change; nay, he may be (in ſome ſenſe) farther off, as Chriſt ſaith, *The Scribes and Phariſees were farther from heaven*, which all

all their show of godliness, then *Publicans or harlots*, in all their sin and uncleanness, *Matt.* 21. 31. Because resting in a false work, a partial change, we neglect to seek after a true and saving change. There is nothing more common then to mistake our state, and by overweaning thoughts misjudge our condition, and so perish in our own delusions.

The world is full of those *foolish builders*, that *lay the foundation of their hopes of eternal salvation upon the sand*, *Matt.* 7. 26.

Now, my Brethren, would you not mistake the way to heaven, and perish in a delusion? Would you not be found fools at last? For none are such fools as the spiritual fool, who is a fool in the *great business of salvation*. Would you not be fools for your souls, and for eternity? O then labor after, and pray for a through *work of conversion*, beg of God that he would make *a saving change* in your *souls*, that *you may be altogether Christians*. All other changes below this *saving change*, this *heart change*, make us but *almost Christians*.

11. *A man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Jehu did not only serve God, and do what he commanded him, but was very zealous in his service, 2 *Kings* 10. 16. *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord of hosts*; and yet in all this, Jehu was a very hypocrite. 2 *Chron.* 24. 2. *Joash* was a great reformer in *Jehojadahs* time; it is said, *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehojadah the Priest*; but when Jehojadah died, *Joash* his zeal for God died with him, & he becomes a very wretch.

Object. But the Apostle makes zeal to be a note of sound Christianity, *Gal.* 4. 18. *It is good*

to be zealously affected in a good thing; nay, it seems to be the non-[illegible]h qualification for obtaining eternal life. *The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force, Matt.* 11.12.

It is true, there is a zeal which is good, and which renders the soul highly acceptable to God; a zeal that never misses of heaven and salvation.

Now this is a zeal which is a celestial fire, the true temper and heat of all the affections to God and Christ; *Qui non zelat, non amat.* It is a zeal wrought and kindled in the soul by the Spirit of God, who first knows it, and then sets it on work. It is a zeal that hath the Word of God for its guide, directing it in working, both in regard of its object and end, manner and measure. It is a zeal that checks sin, and forwards the heavenly life. It is a zeal that makes the glory of God its chief end, which swallows up all by-ends; *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, John* 2.17.

But now all zeal is not this kind of zeal; there is a false zeal, as well as a true; every grace hath its counterfeit: As there is fire, which is true heavenly fire on the Altar, so there is strange fire. *Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire upon God's Altar, Lev.* 10.1.

There are several kinds of zeal, none of which are true and sound, but false and counterfeit.

I will instance in eight particulars.

First, *there is a blind zeal*, a zeal without knowledge, *Rom.* 10.2. *They have a zeal* (saith the Apostle) *but not according to knowledge*: Now as knowledge without zeal is fruitless, so zeal without knowledge is dangerous: it is like wild fire in the hand of a fool, or like the Devil in the man possessed, that threw him sometimes into the fire,

some-

sometimes into the water, *Matth.* 17.5. *Zelus absque scientia, quo vehementius irruit, eo gravius corruit. Bern.*

The eye is the light of the body, and the understanding is the light of the soul: now as the body without the light of the eye cannot go without stumbling; so the soul without the light of the mind, cannot act without erring.

Zeal without knowledge, is like an *ignus fatuus*, in a dark night, that leads a traveller out of his way into the boggs and myre. This was the zeal of *Paul*, *Acts* 22. 3, 4. while he was a Pharisee; *I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day, and I persecuted this way unto the death.* And so *Acts* 26.9. *I verily thought with my self, I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.* So *Phil.* 3 6. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church.*

Such a zeal was that in *John* 16. 2. *They shall put you out of the Synagogue*; (silence you, you shal not be suffered to preach) *yea, the time comes, that whoever kills you, will think that he doth God service.* This is great zeal, but yet it is a blind zeal, and that God abhors,

Secondly, *there is a partial zeal*; in one thing fire-hot, in another key-cold; zealous in this thing, and yet careless in another: many are first-Table Christians, zealous in the duties of the first-Table, and yet neglect the second: thus the *Pharisees* were zealous in their *Corban*, *Matth.* 23. 23. and yet unnatural to their parents, suffering them to starve and perish. *Lyra* hath these words, *Filius per professionem factam in religione excusatur subveniendo parentibus.* Others are second-Table-Christians, zealous in the duties of the second

Table, but neglect the first; more for righteousness among men then for holiness towards God. But now he who Religion ends with the first Table, or begins with the second, he is a fool in his profession, for *he is but almost a Christian.*

The woman that was for the dividing the child, was not the true mother; and he that is for dividing the Commands, is not a true believer.

Jehu was zealous against *Ahabs* house, but not so against *Jeroboams calves*, 2 *Kings* 10. 16. *compared with verse* 29. many are zealous against sin of opinion, that yet use no zeal against the sins of their conversation.

Now as we know that the sweat of the whole body is a sign of health, but the sweat of some one part only, shows a distemper, and therefore Physicians do reckon such a heat to be symptomatical. *Joan. Fern, de febribus, lib* 4. *cap.*19.

So where zeal reaches to every Command of God alike, that is a sign of a sound constitution of soul; but where is a partial, where a man is hot in one part, and cold in another; that is symptomatical of some inward spiritual distemper.

Thirdly, *there is a misplaced zeal*, fixed upon unsuitable and disproportionable Objects. Many are very zealous in trifling things that are not worth it, and trifle in the things that most require it; like the *Pharisees* that were diligent tythers of *mint*, *anniſe*, *& cummin*, but neglected, τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, *the weightier matters of the Law*, *judgement*, *mercy & faith*, *Matt.* 23. 23. They had no zeal for these, though very hot for the other: many are more zealous for a ceremony, then for the substance of Religion; more zealous for bowing at the Name of Jesus, then for conformity to the life of Jesus; more zealous for

a holy vestment, then for a holy life; more zealous for the inventions of men, then for the institutions of Christ. Heathens will rise up in judgement against such men. *Deus non suo perstitione coli vult, sed pietate*, said *Cicero*.

This is a superstitious zeal, and usually found in men unconverted, whom grace never was wrought in. When was it that *Paul* was so *exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers*, as he saith, *Gal.* 1.14. but only when he was in his wretched and unconverted state? as you may see in the next verses, *But when it pleased God to call me by his grace, then I conferred not with flesh and blood*, v. 15, 16. *Paul* had another kind of zeal then, acted by other kind of principles.

Fourthly, *there is a selfish zeal*, that hath a mans own ends for its motive; *Jehu* was very zealous, but it was not so much for God, as for the Kingdom, not so much in obedience to the Command, as in design to step into the Throne; and therefore God threatens to punish him for that very thing he commands him to do, *Hos.* 1.4 *I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*. Because he shed that blood to gratifie his lust, not to obey God. So *Simeon* and *Levi* pretended great zeal for circumcision, seem very zealous for the honor of Gods ordinances, when in truth their zeal was for covetousness, and revenge upon the *Sechemites*, *Gen.* 34 14, 15. *compared with verse* 25, 26, 27 28. 29.

Fifthly, *there is an outside zeal*, such was that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, they would not eat with unwashen hands, but yet would live in unseen sins; they would wash the cup often, but the heart seldom; paint the outside, but neglect the in-

side. *Jehu* was a mighty outside reformer, 2 *Kings* 10. 16 but he reformed nothing within, for he had a base heart under all, *verse* 31. *Jehu took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord with all his heart.* Though his fleece was fair, his liver was rotten. *Ne apperet quisquam ultra videri quam est ut possis ultra esse quam videtur. Greg.*

Our Lord Christ observes of the *Pharisees*, *They pray to be seen of men*; and fast so, *that they may appear to men to fast*, *Matt.* 6. 5, 16.

Sixthly, *there is a soren sick zeal*, that runs out upon others, like the candle in the lantern, that sends all the heat out at top, or as the lewed woman *Solomon* mentions, whose *feet abide not in her own house*, *Prov.* 7. 11.

Many are hot and high against the sins of others, and yet cannot see the same in themselves, like the *Lamiæ*, that put on their spectacles when they went abroad; but pulled them off within doors.

It is easie to see faults in others, and as hard to see them in our selves. *Jehu* was zealous against *Baal* and his Priests, because that was *Achabs* sin; but not against the calves of *Bethel*, because that was his own sin. This zeal is the true character of an hypocrite: his own garden is over-run with weeds, while he is busie in looking over his neighbors pale.

Seventhly, *there is a sinful zeal*; all the former may be called sinful from some defect; but this I call sinful a more special notion, because against the life and chief of Religion; it is a zeal against zeal, that flies not a prophaness, but at the very power of godliness; not at error, but at truth, and is most hot against the most spiritual and impor-

tant;

cant truths of the times. Whence else are the sufferings of men for the truth, but from this spirit of zeal against truth? This may be called a deviliſh zeal: for as there is the faith of Devils, ſo there is the zeal of Devils; *therefore his rage is great, becauſe he knows his time is ſhort*, Jam. 2. 19. Rev. 12. 12.

8. *There is a Scriptureleſs zeal*, that is not butted & bounded by the word, but by ſome baſe and low ends; ſuch was *Sauls* zeal, when God bids him deſtroy *Amalek and ſpare neither man nor beaſt*, 1 *Sam.* 15. 3. then contrary to Gods command, he ſpares the *beſt of the ſheep and oxen*, under pretence of zeal for Gods ſacrifice.

Another time when he had no ſuch command, then he ſlays the *Gibeonits*, *in zeal to the children of Iſrael and Judah*, 2 *Sam.* 21. 2.

Many a mans zeal is greater then & there, when and where he hath the leaſt warrant from God.

The true ſpirit of zeal is bounded by Scripture, for it is for God, and the concernments of his glory. God hath no glory from that zeal that hath no Scripture warrant.

Now then, if the zeal of a man in the things of God, may be only a blind zeal, or a partial zeal, or a miſplaced zeal, or a ſelfiſh zeal, or an out-ſide zeal, or a forenſick zeal, or a ſinful zeal, or a ſcriptureleſs zeal, then it is evident that a man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*.

12. *A man may be much in prayer, he may cry often, and pray much, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

So did the *Phariſees*, whom yet our Lord Chriſt rejects for hypocrits, *Matt.* 12. 13.

Object. But is not a praying frame an argument of a sincere heart? are not the Saints of God called, *The generation of them that seek the face of God? Psal.24. 6.*

Solut. A man is not therefore a Christian, because he is much in prayer. I grant,

That those prayers that are from the workings and sighings of Gods Spirit in us; from sincere hearts lifted up to God; from a sense of our own emptiness, and Gods infinit fulness; That are suited to Gods will the great rule of prayer.

That are for spiritual things, more then temporal.

That are accompanied with faith and dependance: Such prayers speak a man *altogether a Christian.* But now a man may be much in prayer, and yet be a stranger to such prayer: As,

1. Nature may put a man upon prayer, for it is a part of natural worship, it may put a child of God upon prayer; so it did Christ, *Matth. 26. 39. 42. He went and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* This was a prayer of Christ, which flowed from the sinless struglings of nature, seeking its own preservation.

2. A man may pray in pretence for a covering to some sin; so did those devout *Pharisees, Matt. 23.14. Wo to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrits; for ye devour widdows houses, and for a pretense make long prayers, therefore ye shal receive the greater damnation.* So the Papist seem very devout to pray a rich mans soul out of Purgatory, but it is to cheat the heir of much of his estate, under pretence of praying for his fathers soul.

3. A man may pray, and yet love sin, as *Augustin,*

guſtin, before *converſion*, prayed againſt his ſin, but was afraid God ſhould hear him and take him at this word. Now God hears not ſuch prayers, *Pſal. 66.18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer.*

4. A man may pray much for temporal things, and little for ſpiritual things; and ſuch are the prayers of moſt men, crying out moſt for temporal things. More for, *Who will ſhow us any good? Pſal.4 6* then for, *Lord, liſt upon us the light of thy countenance. David* copies out the prayer of ſuch, *Pſal. 144. 12. &c. That our ſons may be as plants, and that our daughters may be as corner ſtons poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a Palace: That our garners may be full, &c. Happy is the people that is in ſuch a caſe.* This is the carnal hearts prayer, and this *David* calls vanity, *verſe 11. They are ſtrange children, whoſe mouth ſpeak vanity.*

5. A man may pray, and yet be far from God in prayer. *This people draw nigh to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, Iſa. 29.13. Matt. 15.8.* A man may pray, and yet have no heart in prayer, and that God chiefly looks at; *My ſon, give me thy heart, Prov 23.26.*

The *Jews* have this ſentence written upon the walls of their Synagogues, *Prayer without the intention of the mind, is but a body without a ſoul.*

It is not enough to be conſcionable to uſe prayer, but we muſt be conſcionable to the uſe of Prayer. Many are ſo conſcientious, that they dare not but pray; and yet ſo irreligious, that they have no heart in prayer: a common work of God may make a man conſcionable to do duries, but nothing leſs then ſaving grace in the heart will make a

man conscionable in the doing of them.

6. A mans prayer may be a lie: as a profession wi hout sanctity, is a lie to the world; so prayer wi hout sincerity, is a lie to God. It is said of *Israel*, that they *sought God, and enquired early after him*, *Psal.* 78. 34. they were much in prayer, and God calls all but a lie. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied to him with their tongues, for their heart was not with him*, v. 36, 37. Some derive the Latin *colo*, for worship, from the Greek κολακεύειν, *to flatter*, and the English word *flatter* from the Greek word λατρεύειν, *to worship*.

Hearken to my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips, saith *David*, *Psalm* 17. 1.

7. Afflictions and the *pressures* of outward evils will make a man may pray, and pray much; *Psal.* 78. 34. *When he slew them, then they sought him and returned and enquired early after God. Nuper me amici cujusdam languor admonuit optimos esse nos dum infirmi simus*, *Plin. Ep.* 16 *lib.* 7. The Heathen Mariners call every man upon his God, when in a storm: when they fear drowning, then they fall to praying, *Jon.* 1. 5. Mariners are, for the most part, none of the devoutest, nor much addicted to prayer, they will swear twice, where they pray once; and yet it is said, *They cry to the Lord in their trouble*, *Psal.* 107. 23, 28. and hence you have a Proverb, *He that cannot pray, let him go to sea. Qui nescit orare, discat navigare.*

They powred out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them, *Isa.* 26. 16.

Now then, if nature may put a man upon prayer; if a man may pray in pretence and design; if a man may pray, and yet love sin; if a man

may

may pray mostly for temporal things: if a man may pray, and yet be far from God in prayer; if prayer may be a lie; or if it may be only the cry of the soul under affliction: sure then a man may be much in prayer, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Object. But suppose a man pray and prevail with God in prayer, surely that is a witness from heaven of mans sincerity in prayer; now I pray & prevail; I ask & am answered.

Solut. A man may pray, and be answered: for God many times answers prayers in judgement; as God is sometimes silent in mercy, so he speaks in wrath: and as he sometimes denies prayer in mercy, so he sometimes answers in judgement: when men are over importunat in some things their lusts are upon, and will take no nay, then God answers in judgement, *Psal.* 78. 29. *He gave them their own desire*; They had desired Quails, and God sends them; but now mark the judgement, *verse* 30, 31. *While the meat was in their mouthes, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew them.*

Object. I, but suppose a mans affections are much stirred in prayer, how then? Is not that a true note of Christianity? Now my affections are much stirred in prayer.

Solut. So was *Esau* when he sought the blessing, *He sought it carefully with tears*, *Heb.* 12. 17. A man may be affected with his own parts in a duty; while good notions pass through his head, and good words through his lips; some good motions also may stire in his heart; but they are but sparks which fly out at the tunnel of the chimney, which suddenly vanish. So that it is possible a man may pray, and prevail in prayer;

pray and be affected in prayer, & yet be but *almost a Christian.*

13. *A man may suffer for Christ, in his goods, in his name, in his person, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

Every man that bears Christs Cross on his shoulders, doth not therefore bear Christs Image in his soul.

Object. But doth not our Lord Christ make great promises to them that suffer, or lose any thing for him? Doth not he say, *Matth.* 19. 29. *Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands for my Names sake, shal receive an hundred fold, and shal inherit everlasting life?* Sure they are true Christians whom Christs makes this promise to.

Solut. There is a suffering for Christ, that is a note of sincerity, and shal have its reward.

That is, when a man suffers for a good cause, *Matth.* 5. 10, 11, 12. upon a good call, and with a good conscience, for Christs sake, and in Christs strength: when his sufferings are a *filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, Col.* 1 24. when a man suffers as a Christian, as the Apostle hath it, 1 *Pet* 4.6. *If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed;* when a man trusts not himself into sufferings, but stays Gods call, such suffering is a proof of integrity, *Mark* 14. 28, 29.

But now every suffering for Christ, is not suffering as a Christian: For,

1. A man may suffer for Christ, for that profession of Religion that is upon him; the world hates the show of Religion, times may come, that it may cost a man as dear to wear the livery of Christ

Christ, as to wear Christ himself. *Alexander* had like to have lost his life for the Gospel sake, *Acts* 19. 33, yet he was that *Alexander* (as is generally judged) that afterward made *Shipwrak of faith*, and greatly opposed *Pauls* Ministery, 1 *Tim.* 19, 20. *and* 4. 14.

2. A man may suffer for Christ, and yet have no true love to Christ. This is supposed in 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. *Though I give my body to be burned, and have no charity, it profit nothing.*

Love to Christ is the only Noble ground of suffering; but a man may suffer much upon other ends.

1. Out of opinion of meriting by our sufferings, as the Papists: Or,

2. Out of vain-glory, or for applause among professors: some have died that their names might live: Or,

3. Out of a *Roman* resolution, or stoutness of spirit. *Vicit amor patriæ laudisque immensa cupido.*

4. Out of a design of profit, as *Judas* forsook all for Christ, hoping to mend his market by closing with him: Or,

5. Rather to maintain an opinion, then for truths propagation: *Socrates* died for maintaining that there was but one God; but whether he died rather for his own opinion, then for Gods sake, I think it is no hard matter to determine. Thus a man may suffer for professing Christ, and yet suffer upon wrong principles.

Now then, if a man may suffer for Christ, from the profession that is upon him; or suffer for Christ and yet not truly love him, then a man may suffer for Christ, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

14. *A man may be called of God, and imbrace this call, and yet be but almost a Christian. Judas* is a famous instance of this truth: he was called by Christ himself, and came at the call of Christ, and yet *Judas* was but *almost a Christian.*

Object. But is not the being under the call of God, a proof of our interest in the predestinating love of God? Doth not the Apostle say, *Whom he predestinated, them he called? Rom* 8. 30. Nay: doth he not say in the same verse, *Whom he called, them he justified?* Nay: doth not God call all whom he intends to save?

Solut. Though God calleth all those that shal be saved, yet all shal not be save whom God calleth: every man under the Gospel is called of God in one sense or other; but yet every man under the Gospel, shal not therefore be saved. *For many are called, but few are chosen, Matt* 20 16.

There is a two fold call of God. Internal, External.

1. There is an internal call of God. Now this call is a special work of the Spirit by the Ministery of the Word, whereby a man is brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace; *out of darkness into light*; from being *vessels of wrath*, to be made *heirs of life, Acts* 26. 18.

I grant, that whoever is under this call of God, is called effectually and savingly, called to be a Christian indeed. *Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to me, John* 6. 45.

2. There is a call of God, which a man may have, and yet not be this call: there is an external call of God, which is by the Ministery of the Word.

Now every man that lives under the preaching

ching of the Gospel, is thus called: God calls every soul of you to repent, and lay a sure foundation for heaven and salvation, by the Word your hear this day, *Matt.* 22. 9.

But now every man that is thus called, is not therefore a Christian: For,

1. Many under the call of God, come to Christ, but are not converted to Christ, have nothing of the grace and life of Christ; such as he, *Matt.* 22. who when Christ sent out his servants to bid guests unto the marriage, came in at the call of Christ, but yet *had not on the wedding garment*, *v.* 11. that is, had none of the grace & righteousness of Jesus Christ.

1. Many that are under the call of the Gospel, come to Christ, and yet afterwards fall away from Christ, as *Judas* and *Demas* did, 2 *Tim.* 4. 10. It is said, when Christ preached a doctrine which his disciples did not like, that *from that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*, *John* 6 66.

Now then, if many are under this external call of God only; if many that come to Christ are not converted to Christ, but fall away from Christ; then a man may be called of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

15. *A man may have the Spirit of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* *Balaam* had the Spirit of God given him when he blessed *Israel*, *Numb.* 24. 2. *Balaam saw Israel abiding in tents, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.* *Judas* had, for by the Spirit he cast out Devils: he was one of them that came to Christ, and said, *Lord even the Devils are subject to us.* *Saul had*, 1 *Sam.* 10. 10. *Behold a company of Prophets met him, and the*

Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them:

Object. But you will say, *Can a man have the Spirit of God, and yet not be a Christian?* Indeed, the Scripture saith, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. 8. 9. but surely if any man have the Spirit of Christ, he is his.

Solut. There is a having the Spirit, which is a sure mark of Saintship. Where the Spirit is an effectual prevailing principle of grace & sanctification, renewing & regenerating the heart. Where the Spirit is as a potent worker, *helping the souls infirmities*, Rom. 8. 26. Where the Spirit is so as to *abide for ever*, John 14. 16. But now every man that hath the Spirit, hath not the Spirit in this manner: For,

1. A man may have the Spirit only transiently, not abidingly: the Spirit may be in a man, and yet not dwel in a man: the Spirit is wherever he dwels; but he doth not dwel wheresoever he is: he is in all, but dwells in Saints only: he is in all, *per divinitatis præsentiam*, Lumb. 1. sent. dist. 17. but dwels in Saints only *per inhabitationis gratiam*: the hypocrit may have the Spirit for a season, but not to abide in him for ever.

2. A man may *have the Spirit*, and yet not be *born of the Spirit*, John 3. 4. 5. every true Christian is *born of the Spirit*; an hypocrit may have the gifts of the Spirit, but not the graces: the Spirit may be in him by way of *illumination*, but not by way of *sanctification*, by way of *conviction*, but not by way of *conversion*: though he may have much common *grace* for the good of others, yet he may have no *special grace* for the good of himself; though his profession be spiritual, yet is his state and condition carnal.

3. A

3. A man may have the Spirit only as a spirit of bondage: this many have the Spirit working only to bondage. *The spirit of bondage is an operation of the holy Ghost by the Law, convincing the conscience of sin, & of the curse of the Law, and working in the soul such an apprehension of the wrath of God, as makes the thoughts of God a terror to him.*

This Spirit may be, and often is, without saving grace. This operation of the Spirit was in *Cain* and *Judas*.

Though none that receive the Spirit of *adoption*, but they first receive the Spirit of *bondage*; yet many receive the Spirit of *bondage*, that never receive the Spirit of *adoption*.

4. A man may have the Spirit of God working in him, and yet it may be resisted by him. It is said of the *Jews*, *Isa* 63.10. *They rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit*: and the same sin is charged upon their children, *Acts* 7.51. *Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart, ye have always resisted the holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.* The hypocrit retains not the Spirit so long, as is come up to *regeneration* and *adoption*; but quenches the motions of it, and thereby miscarries eternally.

5. A man may have the Spirit, and yet sin that impardonable sin: he may have the holy Ghost, and yet sin the sin against the holy Ghost: nay, no man can sin this sin against it, but he that hath some degree of it.

The true believer hath so much of the Spirit such a work of it in him, that he cannot sin that sin *He that is born of God sins not*; to wit, *that sin unto death*; for that is meant, 1 *John* 7.16, 17, 18. The carnal professed sinner, he cannot sin that sin, be-

because he is carnal & sensual, *having not the Spirit*, *Jude* 19. A man must have some measure of the Spirit, that sins this sin; so hath the hypocrite, he is said to *be partaker of the holy Ghost*, *Heb.* 6. 4. and he only is capable of sinning the sin against the holy Ghost.

Now then, if a man may have the Spirit transiently only, not abidingly: if a man may have the Spirit, and yet not be born of the Spirit: if he may have the Spirit only as a Spirit of bondage: if a man may have the Spirit working in him, and yet it may be resisted by him: if a man may have the Spirit, and yet sin that unpardonable sin against it; then surely a man may have the Spirit of God, and yet be *but almost a Christian.*

16. *A man may have faith, and yet be but almost a Christian.* *Luke* 8. 15. *The stony ground* (that is, these hearers set out by the stony ground) *for a while believed.* It is said, *John* 1. 23. *That many believed in the Name of Christ, yet Christ durst not commit himself to them. Fides minime fides, quippe ex miraculis nata.* Though they trusted in Christ, yet Christ would not trust them; and why? *because he knew all men*, *v* 24. He knew they were rotten at the root, notwithstanding their faith. A man may have all faith, even to remove *mountains*, and yet *nothing*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 2.

Object. But how can this be, that a man may have faith, and yet be but *almost a Christian*? Doth not our Lord Christ promise life eternal, and salvation to all that believe? Is not this the Gospel that is to be preached to every creature, *He that believeth, shal be saved*? *Mark* 16. 16.

Solut. Though it is true what our Lord Christ saith, that *he that believed, shal be saved*: yet it

it is as true that many believe that shal never be saved: for *Simon Magus* believed; yea *James* saith, *The Devils believe and tremble*, *James* 2. 19. Now none will say, these shal be saved.

As it is true what the Apostle saith, *All men have not faith*, 2 *Thess* 3. 2. so it is as true, that there are some men have faith, who are no whit the better for their faith.

You must know therefore there is a twofold faith, *Special and saving*, *common and not saving*.

1. There is a saving faith. This is called, *Faith of the operation of God*, *Col.* 2. 10.

It is a work of Gods own Spirit in the soul. It is such a faith, as rests and casts the soul wholly upon Christ, for grace and glory, pardon and peace, sanctification and salvation. It is an united act of the whole soul, understanding, will and affections, all concurring to unit the soul to an all-sufficient Redeemer. It is such a faith as *purifies the heart*, *Acts* 15. 9. and makes it clean: it influences and gives strength and life to all other graces.

Now whoever hath this faith, is a Christian indeed: this is the *faith of Gods elect*. *Tit.* 1. 1. But then,

2. There is a common faith, not saving; a fading and temporary faith. There is the faith of *Simon Magus*, as well as the faith of *Simon Peter*. *Simon Magus* believed, and yet was in *the gall of bitterness*, *and in the bond of iniquity*, *Acts* 8. 13. *compared with vers.* 23.

Now *Simon Magus* hath more followers then *Simon Peter*. The faith of most men will at last be found to be no better then the faith of *Simon Magus*: For,

First,

First, the faith of most is but a *temporary faith*, it dures for a while, and then dies and perisheth: true and saving faith, such as is the *faith of God's elect*, *Luke* 22. 23. cannot die; it may fail in the act but not in the habit: the sap may not be in the branch, but it is alwayes in the root.

That faith that perisheth, that faith a man may have and perish.

Secondly, there is a faith that lies only in generals, not in particulars; as there is a general and particular object of faith, so there is a general and particular faith. The general object of faith is the whole Scripture; the particular of faith is Christ in the promise.

Now many have a general faith to believe all the Scripture, and yet have no faith to make a particular application of Jesus Christ in the promise.

Devils and Reprobates may believe the truth of the Scripture, and what is written of the dying and suffering of Christ for sinners: but there are but few that can close up themselves in the wounds of Christ, and by his stripes fetch in healing to their souls.

Thirdly, there is a faith that is seated in the understanding, but not in the will; this is a very common faith; many assent to the truth.

They believe all the Attributes of God, that he is just, holy, wise, faithful, good, merciful, *&c.* But yet they rest not on him notwithstanding.

They believe the Commands are true, but yet do not obey them; they believe the promises are true, but yet do not imbrace and apply them; they believe the threatnings are true, but yet do not flee from them.

Thus their faith lies in assent, but not consent; they

they have faith to confess a Judgement, but none to take out execution, by assent they lay a foundation, but never build upon it by application.

They believe that Christ died to save them that believe, and yet they believe not in Christ that they may be saved.

Oh; my brethren, it is not a *believing head*, but a *believing heart*, that makes a Christian: *with the heart man believes to righteousness Rom.* 10. 10. without this *our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins* 1 *Cor.* 15. 17.

Fourthly, there is a faith without experience; many believe the Word upon hearsay; to be the Word of God; but they never felt the power and vertue of it upon their hearts and consciences. Now what good is it to believe the truth of the Word, if a mans conscience never felt the power of the Word? What is it to believe the truth of the promise, if we never tasted the sweetness of the promise?

We are in this case, like a man that believes the description others makes of strange Countreys, but never travelled them to know the truth: or as a patient that believes all the Physician saith, but yet tryes none of his potions. We believe the Word, because we connot gain-say it; but yet we have no experience of any saving good wrought by the word, and so are but *almost a Christian.*

Fifthly, there is a faith that is without brokenness of heart, that doth not avail to melt or soften the heart, and therefore is not true faith: For the least true faith is ever joyned with a bending will, and a broken heart.

Sixthly, there is a faith that transforms not the heart: Faith without fruit, that doth not bring forth

forth the new creature, in the soul; but leaves it in a state of sin and death.

This is a Faith that makes a man a fond professor, but not a sound believer: he believes the truth, but not as it is in Jesus, *Eph.* 4. 21. For then it would change and transform him into the likeness of Jesus. He believes that a man must be changed that would be saved, but yet is not savingly changed by believing. Thus while others believe to salvation, he believes to damnation: *For his web shal not become a garment, neither shal he cover himself with his work*, *Isai.* 56. 9.

Now then, if a mans faith may be but temporary, or may ly only in generals, or may be seated in the understanding only, or may be without experience, or may be without a broken heart, or without a new heart; surely then a man may have faith, he may *taste of this heavenly gift*, and yet be but *almost a Christian*, *Heb.* 6. 4.

17. A man may go further yet: *He may possibly have a love to the people of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Every kind of love to those who are Saints, is not a proof of our Saintship: *Pharaoh* loved *Joseph*, and advanced him to the second place in the Kingdom, and yet *Pharach* was but a wicked man. *Ahab* loved *Jehoshaphat*, and made a league with him, and married his daughter *Athaliah* to *Jehoram*, *Jehoshaphats* son, and yet *Ahab* was a wicked wretch.

Object. But you will say, This seems to contradict the testimony of the Scripture; for that makes love to the Saints and people of God, a sure proof of our regeneration, and interest in life eternal, 1 *John* 3. 14. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.*

Nay,

Nay, the Spirit of God putteth this as a characteristical distinction between saints and sinners, in v. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* By *brethren* we do not understand, *brethren by place*, those who are of the same Country or Nation, such are called brethren, *Rom.* 9. 3. *Acts* 7. 23, 25. Nor do we understand *brethren by race*, those who are descended of the same parents; such are called brethren, *Matt.* 1. 2. But by brethren, we understand *brethren by grace*, *Phil.* 16. and supernatural regeneration, such as are the children of God; and these are the brethrens whom to love is a sure sign that we are the children of God.

Solut. To this I answer, That there is a love of the children of God, which is a proof of our being the children of God.

As for instance, when we love them as such; for that very reason, as being the Saints of God; when we love them for the Image of God which appeareth in them, because of that grace and holiness which shineth forth in their conversations, this is truly commendable: to love the godly for godliness sake, the Saints for Saintship sake, this is a sure testimony of our Christianity. The *love of grace* in another, is a good proof of *the life of grace* in our selves. There can be no better evidence of the Spirit of Christ in us, then to love the *image of Christ* in others. For this is a certain truth, that a sinner cannot love a Saint as such. An *Israelit* is an abomination to an *Egyptian*.

There is a contrariety and natural enmity be-

between the two ſeeds, *Gen* 31. between the children of the world, and thoſe whom the Father in his eternal love hath choſen out of the world, *John* 15.16.

It is likeneſs which is the great ground of love. *Simile ſimili gaudet.* Now there is the higheſt diſſimilitude and unlikeneſs between an unregenerat ſinner, and a child of God; and therefore a child of God cannot love a ſinner as a ſinner; *in whoſe eyes a vile perſon is contemned, Pſal.* 15 4. He may love him as a creature, he may love his ſoul, or he may love him under ſome relation that he ſtands in to him. Thus God loves the damned ſpirits, as they are his creatures, but as fallen Angels he hateth them with an infinit hatred. So to love a ſinner *quatenus* a ſinner, this a child of God cannot do, ſo neither can a ſinner love a child of God, as a child of God. That he may love a child of God, that I grant, but it is upon ſome other conſideration, he may love a perſon that is holy, not the perſon for his holineſs, but for ſome other reſpect. As,

1. A man may love a child of God for his loving, peaceable, courteous deportment to all with whom he converſeth. Religion beautifies the converſation of a man, and ſets him off to the eye of the world: The grace of God is no friend to a moroſe, churliſh, unmannerly behavior among men; it provokes in us an affable demeanor and ſweetneſs to all; and where this is found, it winneth reſpect and love from all.

2. A man may love a Saint for his outward greatneſs, and ſplendor in the World, *Jam.* 2. 2,3. men are very apt to honor worldly greatneſs: and therefore the *rich Saint* ſhal be loved and honored, whilſt

whilst the *poor Saint* is hated and despised. This is as if a man should value the goodness of his sword by the imbroidery of his belt, or his horse for the beauty of his trappings, rather then for his strength and swiftness.

True love to the *children of God*, reaches to all the children of God, poor as well as rich, bond as well as free, ignoble as well as noble; for the Image of Christ is alike amiable and lovely in all,

3. A man may love a child of God for his fidelity, and usefulness in his place. Where Religion in the power of it taketh hold of a mans heart, it makes him true to all his betrustruments, diligent in his business, faithful in all his relations, and this obligeth respect. A *carnal* master may prize a *godly* apprentice or servant that makes conscience of pleasing his master, & is diligent in promoting his *interest*.

I might instance in many things of the like nature, as charity, beauty, wit, learning, parts *&c.* which may procure love to the people of God from the men of the world. But this love is no proof of charity: For,

First, It is but a *natural* love, arising from some carnal respect, or self-ends: that love which is made by the Scripture an evidence of our regeneration, *is a spiritual* love, *Col.* 1 8. the principal load stone and attractive where of, is grace and holiness: it is a love which embraceth *a righteous man in the name of a righteous man Matth.* 10 41.

2. A carnal mans love to Saints, is a limited and bounded love, it is not universal, *to all the seed Esth.* 10.3. Now as in sin, he that doth not make conscience of every sin, maketh conscience of no sin as sin; so he who doth not love all in whom

he Image of *Christ* is found, loveth none for that of the Image of Christ which is found in them.

Now then, if the love we bear to the people of God may possible arise from natural love only, or from some carnal respect; or if it be a limited love, not extended to all the people of God, then it is possible that a man may love the people of God, and yet be no better then *almost a Christian.*

18. *A man may obey the commands of God, yea many of the commands of God, and yet be but almost a Christian. Balaam* seems very conscientious of steering his course by the compass of Gods command, when *Balak* sent to him to come and curse the people of God, saith *Balaam*; *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, Numb.* 22. 18. and so in the 38. *verse* saith he, *The word that God putteth in my mouth, that I shal speak*; the young man went far in *obedience, Matt.* 10. 20. *All these have I observed from my youth up.* And yet he was but an hypocrit, for he forsook Christ after all.

Object. But is it not said, *He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth me: and he that loueth me, shal be loved of my Father and I will love him, and manifest my self unto him? John* 14. 21. And doth not our Lord Christ tell us expressly, *Ye are my friends, if ye do what I command you? John* 15. 14. And can a man be a friend of Christ, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Solut. I answer, that there is an obedience to the commands of Christ, which is a sure proof of our Christianity and friendship to Christ.

This obedience hath a threefold property, It is *Euangelical, Universal, Continual.*

First,

First, it is *Evangelical* obedience, and that both in matter and manner, ground and end.

In the *matter* of it, and that is what God requires, *John* 15. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do what ever I command you.* In the *manner* of it, and that is according as God requires, *Joh.* 4. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* In the *ground* of it, & that is, *a pure heart, a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned,* 1 *Tim.* 1. 5. In the *end* of it, and that is the honor and glory of God: *Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God,* 1 *Cor.* 10. 31.

Secondly, it is an *univerſal* obedience, which extendeth it ſelf to all the commands of God alike: it reſpects the duties of both Tables; ſuch was the obedience of *Caleb, who followed the Lord fully, Num.* 14. 24. and of *David, who had reſpect to all the commands, Pſ.* 119 6.

Thirdly, it is a *continual* obedience, a putting the hand to Gods plow without looking back. *I have inclined my heart to perform thy ſtatuts alway, even to the end, Pſal.* 119. 112. *Incipere multorum eſt, perſeverare paucorum. Bern.*

He that thus obeys the command of God, is a Chriſtian indeed, a friend of Chriſt indeed, but all obedience to the commands of God, is not this obedience. For,

1. There is a partial obedience, a piecemeal Religion, when a man obeys God in one command, and not in another; owns him in one duty, and not in another; when a man ſeems to make conſcience of the duties of one Table, and not of the duties of another. This is the Religion of moſt.

Now this obedience is no obedience; for as he that doth not love God *above all*, doth not love God *at all*; ſo he that doth not obey *all* the Commands *univerſally*, cannot be ſaid to obey any Command *truly*. It is ſaid of thoſe in *Samaria*, that they *feared the Lord, and ſerved their own Gods after their own manner*, 2 *Kings* 17.33. And yet in the very next verſe is it ſaid, *They feared not the Lord*; ſo that their fear of the Lord was no fear: in like manner that obedience to God is no obedience, which is but a partial and piece-meal obedience.

2. A man may obey much, and yet be in his old nature; and if ſo, then all his obedience in that eſtate, is but *ſplendidum peccatum*, a painted ſin: *he that offereth an oblation, is as if he offered ſwines blood, and he that burneth incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol, Iſa* 66.3. The nature muſt be renewed, before the command can be righly obeyed; for *a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, Matt.*7.18. Whatever a mans performances are, they cannot be called *obedience*, whilſt the heart remaineth unregenerat, becauſe the *principle* is falſe and unſound: every duty done by a believer, is accepted of God, as a part of his obedience to the will of God, though it be done in much weakneſs, becaute though the believers *hand* is weak, yet his *heart is right*: the hypocrit may have the moſt *active hand*, but the believer hath the moſt *faithful* and *ſincere heart*, *Eph.*6 6. *Rom.*6.17.

3. A man may obey the *Law*, and yet have no love to the *Law-giver*; a carnal heart may do the command of God, but he cannot love God, and therefore cannot do it aright; for love to God, is the foundation and ſpring of all true obedience:

every

every command of God is to be done in love, this it the *fulfilling of the Law Rom.* 3 10. The Apostle saith, *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned* (these seem to be acts of the highest obedience) *yet if I have not love, it profits me nothing*, 1 *Cor.* 13 3.

4. I might add, that a man may be much in obedience, from sinister and base selfish ends, as the *Pharisees prayed much, gave much alms: fasted much*; but our Lord Christ tells us, that it was, *That they might be seen of men, and have glory of men, Matt.* 6. 2 5, 16. Most of the hypocrits piety empties it self into vain glory, and therefore he is but an *emptie vine* in all he doth because *he bringeth forth fruit to himself, Hos.* 10. 1.

It is the end that justifies the action: indeed a good end cannot make a bad action good, but yet the want of a good end, makes a good action bad.

Now then, if a man may obey the commands of God partially, and by halves; if he may do it, and yet be in his natural state; if he may obey the commands of God, and yet not love God; if the ends of his obedience may be sinful and unwarrantable, then a man may be much in obeying the commands of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

19. *A man may be sanctified, and yet be but almost a Christian*: every kind of sanctification doth not make a man a new creature, for many are sanctified that are never renewed. You read in *Heb.* 10.29. of them that count the *blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing.*

Object. But doth not the Scripture tell us, *That both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified,*

are all one; for which cauſe he is not aſhamed to call them brethren, Heb. 2. 11. And can a man be one with Chriſt, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*?

Solut. To this anſwer: You muſt know there is a twofold work of ſanctification ſpoken of in Scripture.

The one common and in effectual.

The other ſpecial and effectual.

That work of *ſanctification* which is true and effectual, is a work of the Spirit of God in the ſoul, enabling it to the *mortifying* of all ſin, to the obeying of every command, to walking with God in all well-pleaſing. *Rom* 8. 13. 1 *Pet.* 1. 2. *Heb.* 13.

Now whoever is thus ſanctified, is one with him that ſanctifieth. Chriſt will not be aſhamed to call ſuch brethren, for they are *fleſh of his fleſh, and bone of his bone*, *Eph.* 5. 30.

But then there is a more common work of ſanctification, which is ineffectual, as to the two great works of dying to ſin, and living to God, *Rom* 6. 11. This kind of ſanctification may help to reſtrain ſin, but not to mortifie ſin; it may lop off the boughs, but it layeth not the ax to the root of the tree; it ſweeps and garniſhes the *room* with common vertues, *Matth.* 12. 42. but doth not adorn it with ſaving graces, ſo that a man is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, notwithſtanding this ſanctification. Or thus, there is an *inward* and *outward* ſanctification.

Inward ſanctification, is that which deals with the ſoul and its faculties, underſtanding, conſcience, will, memory and affections. Outward ſanctification, is that which deals with the life and converſation, but theſe muſt concur to make a man

a man a Chriſtian indeed, therefore the Apoſtle puts them together in his prayer for the *Theſſalonians*, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 23. *The God of peace ſanctifie you wholly: and I pray God your whole ſpirit, and ſoul, and body, be preſerved blameleſs unto the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* A man is then ſanctified wholly, when he is ſanctified both inwardly and outwardly, both in heart and affections, and in life and converſation. Outward ſanctification is not enough without inward, nor inward without outward, we muſt have both *clean hands, and a pure heart*, *Pſal.* 24 4. *Non magna munera, ſed immunis manus, mens quæ ſincera Deo placens.* The heart muſt be pure, that we may not incur blame from within; and the hands muſt be clean, that we may not incur ſhame from without; we muſt have hearts *ſprinckled from an evil conſcience, and bodies waſhed with pure water*, *Heb.* 10. 22. *We muſt cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. Inward purity is the moſt excellent, but without the outward it is not ſufficient: the true Chriſtian is made up of both.

Now many have clean hands, but unclean hearts; they *waſh the outſide of the cup, and platter, when all is filthy within*, *Matth.* 27. 4. Now the formes without the latter, profiteth a man no more then it profiteth *Pilate*, who condemned Chriſt, to waſh his hands in the preſence of the people; *Manus abluit & cor polluit*, he waſhed his hands of the blood of Chriſt, and yet had a hand in the death of Chriſt. The *Egyptians* Temples were beautiful on the outſide, but within you ſhould find nothing but ſome ſerpent or crocodile. *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly*, *Rom.* 2. 28. *Judas* was a *Saint* without, but a *ſin-*

ner within; openly a *Disciple*, but secretly a *Devil*, *John* 6.70.

Some pretend to inward sanctity, without outward; this is the pretence of the open sinner: Though I sometimes drop an idle foolish word, saith he, or though I sometimes swear an oath, yet I think no hurt, I thank God, my heart is as good as the best: such are like the sinner *Moses* mentions, that *blessed himself in his heart, saying, I shal have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst*, *Deut.* 19, 20.

Some pretend outward sanctity, without inward; such are like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who *outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisie and iniquity*, *Matt.* 23.28. fair professors, but foul sinners.

Inward sanctity, without *outward*, is *impossible*; for it will reform the life: *outward sanctity*, without *inward*, is *unprofitable*, for it will not reform the heart; a man is not a true Christian without both; the body doth not make a man without the soul, nor the soul without the body: both are essential to the being of a man; so the sanctification of both, are essential to the being of the *new man*. True sanctification begins at the heart, but works out into the life and conversation; and if so, then a man may attain to an outward sanctification, and yet for want of the inward, be no better then *almost a Christian*.

20. And so I shal end this long pursuit of the almost Christian in his progress Heaven-ward, with this one general conclusion.

A man may do all (as to external duties and worship) that a true Christian can, and when he hath

hath done all, be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

You muſt know all the Commands of God, have an *intra* and an *extra*; there is (as I may ſay) the body and the ſoul of the Command.

And accordingly there is an *internal* and an *external* worſhip of God.

Now the *internal* acts of worſhipping of God, are to love God, to fear God, to delight in God, to truſt in God, &c.

The external acts of worſhipping God, are by praying, teaching, hearing, &c.

Now there is a vaſt difference between theſe internal and external acts of worſhip (and indeed ſuch a difference there is) that they diſtinguiſh the *altogether* from the *almoſt* Chriſtian; the ſincere believer from the unſound profeſſor: and indeed in this very thing, the main difference between them doth ly.

1. *Internal* acts of worſhip are good, *propter fieri*; the goodneſs doth adhere intrinſecally to the thing done: a man cannot love God, not fear God, but it will be imputed to him for a gracious act, and a great part of his holineſs.

But now *external* acts of worſhip, are not denominated good, ſo much from the matter done, *propter fieri*, as from the manner of doing them; a man cannot ſin in loving and delighting in God, but he may ſin in praying and hearing, &c. for want of a due manner.

2. *Internal* acts of worſhip put a goodneſs into *external*: it is our faith, our love, our fear of God, that makes our duties good.

3. They better the heart, and greaten the degrees of a mans holineſs; external duties do not always do this; a man may pray, and yet his heart

never the holier: he may hear the Word, and yet his heart never the ſofter; but now the more a man fears God, the wiſer he is, *Prov.* 1. 7. the more a man loves God, the holier he is: love is the perfection of holineſs; we ſhal never be perfect in holineſs, till we come to be perfect in love.

4. There is ſuch an excellency in this *internal* worſhip, that he who mixes it with his *external* duties, is a true Chriſtian when he doth leaſt; but without this mixture, he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, that doth moſt.

Internal acts of worſhip, joyned with outward, ſanctifie them, and make them accepted of God though few: *external* acts of worſhip, without inward, make them abhorred of God, though they be *never ſo many*.

So that though the almoſt Chriſtian may do all thoſe duties in hypocriſie, which a true Chriſtian doth in ſincerity; nay, though in doing external duties; he may out do the true Chriſtian, (as the cometh makes a greater blaze then the true ſtars. If *Eliah* faſt and mourn, *Baals* Prieſts will cut their fleſh) Yet he cannot do thoſe *internal* duties that the meaneſt true Chriſtian can,

The almoſt Chriſtian can pray, but he cannot love God: he can teach or hear, *&c.* but he cannot take delight in God.

Mark *Jobs* query concerning the hypocrit; *Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty? Job* 27. 10. This is *Chriſtianorum propria virtus.*

He will *pray* to the *Almighty*, but *will he delight himſelf in the Almighty?* will he take pleaſure in God?

Ah! no: he will not, he cannot.

Delight in God, ariſeth from a ſuitableneſs between

tween the faculty and the object. How none more unsuitable then God and a carnal heart.

Delight arises from the having what we desire, and from enjoying what we have; how then can he delight in God, that neither enjoyeth, nor hath, nor truly desireth God? *Hæc propria est delectationis materia, si cum habeas quæ desideraveris desideratis perfruaris.* Pine in loc.

Delight in God is one of the highest exercises of grace; and therefore how can he delight in God, that hath no grace?

Why then should any Saint of God be discouraged, when he hears how far the almost Christian may go in the way to heaven, when as he that is the weakest true believer, that hath the least true grace, goes farther then he; for he believes in, and loves God.

Should the *almost Christian* do less (as to matter of external duties) yet if he had but the least true faith, the least sincerity of love to Christ, he would surely be saved; & should the true Christian do ten times more duties then he doth, yet had he not faith in Christ, & love to Christ, he would surely be rejected.

Oh, therefore let not any weak believer be discouraged, though hypocrits may out-do them, and go beyond them in duty; for all their duties are done in hypocrisie, but your faith and love to God in duties, is a proof of your sincerity.

I do not speak this to discourage any soul in the doing of duties, or to beat down *outward performance*, but to rectifie the soul in the *doing of them.*

As the Apostle saith, 1 *Cor.* 12. 32. *Covet earnestly the best gifts, but I yet show unto you a more excellent*

way: So I say, covet the best gifts, covet to be much in duties, much in prayer, much in hearing, &c. *But yet I show you a more excellent way*, and that is, the way of faith and love; pray much, but then believe much too. Hear much, read much, but then love God much too. Delight in the Word and Ordinances of God much, but then delight in the God of ordinances more.

And when you are most in *duties*, as to your use of them: Oh, then be sure to be above duties, as to your resting and dependance upon them. Would you be Christians indeed, altogether Christians? Oh, then be much in the use and exercise of ordinances, but be much more in faith and dependance upon Christ and his righteousness; when your obedience is *most to the command*, then let your faith be most upon the *promise*.

The professor rests in his duties, and so is but *almost a Christian*; but you must be sure to rest upon the Lord Christ, this is the way to be *altogether Christians*; for *if ye believe, then are ye Abrahams seed, & heir according to the promise*.

And thus I have answered the first query, to wit, How far a man may go in the way to heaven, and yet be but *almost a Christian*?

1. He may have much knowledge.
2. He may have great gifts.
3. He may have a high profession.
4. He may do much against sin.
5. He may desire grace.
6. He may tremble at the Word,
7. He may delight in the Word.
8. He may be a member of the Church of Christ.
9. He may have great hopes of heaven.

10. He

10. He may be under great viſible changes.

11. He may be very zealous in the matters of Religion.

12. He may be much in prayer.

13. He may ſuffer for Chriſt.

14. He may be called of God.

15. He may in ſome ſenſe have the Spirit of God.

16. He may have ſome kind of faith.

17. He may love the people of God.

18. He may go far in obeying the commands of God.

19. He may be in ſome ſenſe ſanctified.

20. He may do all (as to external duties) that a true Chriſtian can, and yet be no better *then almoſt a Chriſtian.*

The ſecond Queſtion.

Why, or whence is it, that many men go ſo far, or that they come to be almoſt Chriſtians?

Firſt, *It may be to anſwer the call of conſcience:* though few men have grace, yet all men have conſcience.

Now do but obſerve and you ſhal ſee how far conſcience may go in this work.

1. *Conſcience owns a God, and that this God muſt be worſhipped and ſerved by the creature.* Atheiſts in practiſe we have many, ſuch as the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, *Tit.* 1. 16 *They profeſs they know God, but in work they deny him.*

But Atheiſts in judgement none can be; *Tully* a Heathen could ſay, *Nulla gens tam barbara. &c.*

Now there being ſuch a light in conſcience, as to diſcover that there is a God, and that he muſt be worſhipped; by the help of further light, the light of the Word, a man may be enabled to do

much in the ways of God, and yet his heart without a dram of grace.

2. Know this, that *natural conscience is capable of great improvement from the means of grace*; sitting under the ordinances, may exceedingly heighten the endowments of conscience; though they do not sanctifie conscience, it may be much regulated: though it be not at all *renewed*, it may be *enlightned, convinced*, and yet never *savingly converted* and *changed.*

Ye read in *Heb* 6. 4. of some that *were once enlightned, and tasted of the heavenly gifts, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost.* What work shal we call this? It could not be a saving work, a true change and conversion of state: for notwithstanding this enlightning, and tasting, and partaking, yet they are here said to *fall away, vers.* 6.

Had it been a true work of grace, they could never have fallen away from that: a believer may fall, but he cannot fall away; he may fall foully, but he can never fall finally, for *underneath are the everlasting arms, Deut.* 33. 27. his faith is established in the strength of that prayer of Christ, that our faith fail not, *Luke* 22 32. nay, he tells us expressly, that it is eternal life which he gives, from which *we shal never perish, John* 10 28.

This work then here spoken of, cannot be any saving work, because it is not an abiding work; for they that are under it, are said to fall away from it; but though it be not a saving work, yet it is a supernatural work; it is an improvement made by the word upon the conscience of men through the power of the Spirit; and therefore they are said to *taste the good Word of God*, and to be made *partakers of the holy Ghost*; they have not the Spirit abiding

abiding in them savingly, but striving with them, and working upon them convincingly, to the awakening and setting conscience on work. And conscience thus stirred, may carry a man very far in Religion, and in the duties of the Gospel, and yet be but a natural conscience.

A common work of the spirit, may stead a man very much in the duties of Religion, though it must be a special work of the spirit that steads a man to salvation: a man may have the assisting presence of the spirit, enabling him to preach and pray, and yet he may perish for want of the renewing presence of the spirit enabling him to believe: *Judas* had the former, and yet perished for want of the latter: he had the spirit assisting him to cast out devils, but yet he had not the spirit renewing him, for he was cast out himself. Thus a man may have an improved conscience, and yet be a stranger to a renewed conscience, and conscience thus improved, may put a man very much upon duty.

I pray God none of us mistake a *conscience* thus improved by the *word*, for a *conscience* renewed by the spirit; the mistake is very easie, especially when a life of duties is the fruit of it.

3. *The conscience of a natural man is subject to distress and trouble*: though a natural *conscience* is not *sanctified* with grace, yet it is often troubled at sin; trouble of conscience is not incident to *believers* only, but sometimes to *unbelievers* also. A *believers* conscience is sometimes troubled when his sin is truly pardoned; and a natural mans conscience is troubled for sin, though it is never freed from sin. God sometimes sets the Word home upon the sinners conscience, and ap-

plies,

plies the terrors of the law to it, and this fills the soul with fear and horror of death and hell; now in this case the soul usually betakes it self to a life of duties, meerly to fence trouble out of conscience.

When *Absalom* sets fire on *Joabs* corn-fields, 2 *Sam.* 14. 30, 31. then he runs to him, though he refused before; so when God lets a spark of hell (as it were) fall upon the sinners *conscience*, in applying the terrors of the word, this drives the sinner to a life of duties which he never minded before. The ground of many a mans engaging in Religion, is the trouble of his conscience; and the end of his continuing in Religion, is the quieting of conscience, if conscience would never check him, *God* should never hear from him.

Natural conscience hath a voice, and speaks aloud many times in the sinners ears, and telleth him, this ought not to be done, God must not be forgotten, the *Commands* of *God* ought not to be slighted, living in sin will be the ruin of the soul; and hence it is that a natural man runs to duties, and takes up a lifeless and graceless profession, that he may thereby silence conscience. As a man sick in his stomack, what ever sweet morsel he hath eaten, he brings up all, & although it was sweet in the eating, yet it is bitter in the rising.

So it fareth with the sinner, when he is sermon-sick, or conscience-sick; though his sin was *sweet* in the practice; yet the thought of it riseth bitter upon the conscience, and then his profession of Religion is the pill he rouleth about in his mouth, to take away the bitterness of sins taste:

4. *Natural conscience enlightned by the word, may discover to a man much of the misery of a natural state;*

state; though not effectually to bring him out of it, yet so as to make him restless and weary in it, it may show a sinner his nakedness, and hereupon the soul runneth to a life of *duties*, thinking hereby to stead the misery of his case, and to make a covering for his nakedness. It is said, *Gen.* 3. 7. That when *Adam* and *Eva saw they were naiked, they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves a covering.* So when once the sinner seeth his nakedness and vileness, by reason of sin, whereas he should run to Christ, and close with him, and beg his righteousness for a covering, *that the shame of his nackedness do not appear*, *Rev.* 3. 18. he rather runneth to a life of duries and performances, and thus maketh himself a covering with the *fig-leaves of a profession* without *Christ* truly embraced, and conscience at all renewed. Natural man would fain be his own Savior, and supposeth a change of state to be a thing within his own power, & that the true work of grace lyeth in the leaving of the practice of sin, & taking up a life of duties; and therefore upon this principle doth many a graceless professor, outstrip a sound believer; for he resteth in his own performances, and hopeth these will commend him to God.

Quest. If a natural conscience may go thus far: then what difference is there between his natural conscience in hypocrits and sinners, and a renewed conscience in believers? Or how may I know whether the workings of my conscience be the workings of nature only, or else of grace wrought in it?

Answ. I grant, that it is difficult to distinguish between the one and the other, and the difficulty hath a twofold rise.

1. It ariseth from that hypocrisie that is in he best

best Saints; the weakest believer is no *hypocrit*, but yet there is some *hypocrisie* in the strongest believer: where there is *most grace*, there is *some sin*; and where there is *most sincerity*, yet there is *some hypocrisie*.

Now it is very incident to a tender conscience to misgive and mistrusts its state upon the sight of any sin: when he sees hypocrisie break out in any duty or performance, then the complains, *Surely my aims are not sincere, my conscience is not renewed; it is but natural conscience enlightened, not by grace purged and changed.* *Pigmalion* made an Image so lively, that he deceived himself, and taking the picture for a person, fell in love with the picture.

2. It ariseth from that resemblance there is between *grace* and *hypocrisie*; for *hypocrisie* is a resemblance of grace without substance, the likeness of *grace* without the life of *grace*. There is no grace but an hypocrit may have somewhat like it; and there is no duty done by a Christian, but an hypocrit may out-strip him in it. Now when one that hath not true grace shal go farther then one that hath, this may well make the believer question whether his grace be true or not; or whether the workings of his conscience be not the workings of nature only, rather then of grace wrought in it.

But to answer the question; You may make a judgement of this in these seven particulars.

1. *If a natural mans conscience putteth him upon duty, he doth usually bound himself in the work of God.* His duties are limited, his obedience is a limited obedience; he doth one duty, and neglecteth another; he picketh and chooseth among the commands of God; obeyeth one, and slighteth another.

another. Thus much is enough what needs any more? If I do thus and thus, I ſhal go to heaven at laſt.

But now where conſcience is renewed by grace, there it is otherwiſe. Though there may be many weakneſſes which accompany its duties, yet that ſoul never bounds it ſelf in working after God; it never loves God ſo much, but ſtill it would love him more; nor ſeeks him ſo much, but ſtill it would ſeek him more; nor doth it ſerve God ſo wel at any time, but ſtill it makes conſcience of ſerving him better. *A renewed conſcience is a ſpring of univerſal obedience, Pſal.* 119 128, for it ſeeth an infinit excellency, and goodneſs, and holineſs in God, and therefore would fain have its ſervice riſe up towards ſome proportionableneſs to the object: a God of infinit excellencie and goodneſs, ſhould have infinit love, ſaith conſcience: a holy God ſhould have ſervice from a holy heart, ſaith conſcience.

Now then, if I ſet bounds to my love to *GOD*, or to my ſervice to God; if I limit my ſelf in my obedience to the holy God; love one command and ſlight another; obey in one point, and yet ly croſs in another; then is all I do but the working of a natural conſcience. But on the other hand, If I love the Lord with my whole heart and whole ſoul, and ſerve him with all my migh & ſtrength, *Matt.* 22. 37. *Mark* 11 13. *If I eſteem all Gods precepts concerning all things to be right, and have reſpect to all the Commands*, then is my love and ſervice from a renewed conſcience

2. *If a natural mans conſcience check or accuſe for ſin, then he ſeeketh to ſtop the mouth of it, but not to ſatisfie it*; moſt of the natural mans du-

duties are to still and stifle conscience.

But now the Believer chuseth rather to let, conscience cry, then to stop the mouth of it until he can do it upon good terms; until he can fetch in satisfaction to it, from the blood of Jesus Christ, by fresh acts of faith, apprehended and applyed.

The natural man seeketh to still the noise of conscience, rather then to remove the guilt; the Believer seeketh the removal of guilt by the application of *Christs blood*, and then conscience is quiet of it self. As a foolish man, having a mote fallen into his eye, and making it water, he wipeth away the water, and labors to keep it dry, but never searcheth his eye to get out the mote; but a wise man mindeth not so much the wiping, as the searching his eye; somewhat is got in, and that causeth the watering; and therefore the cause must be removed.

Now then, if when conscience accuseth for sin, I take up a life of duties, a form of godliness to stop the mouth of conscience, and if hereupon conscience be still and quiet, then is this but a natural conscience; but if when conscience checks, it will not be satisfied with any thing but the *blood of Christ*, and therefore I use duties to bring me to Christ; and if I beg the *sprinkling* of his *blood* upon conscience, and labor not to much to stop the mouth of it, as to remove guilt from it, then is this a renewed conscience.

3. *There is a natural man, let him go never so far, let him do never so much in matters of Religion, but still he hath his* Delilah, *his bosom lust. Judas* went far, *John* 12. 6. but he carried his covetousness along with him. *Herod* went far, *Mark* 6. 20. *he did many things* under the force of *Johns* Mi-

Miniſtery, but yet there was one thing he did not, he did not put away his brothers w[illegible] his *Herodias* lay in his boſome ſtill. Nay, commonly all the natural mans duties are to hide ſome ſin, his profeſſion is only made uſe of for a *cover ſhame.*

But now the renewed conſcience hateth all ſin, as *David* did. *I hate every falſe way. Pſal.* 119. 128. *he regardeth no iniquity in his heart, Pſal.* 66. 18. he uſeth duties, not to cover ſin, but to help work down, and work out ſin.

Now then if I profeſs Religion, if I make mention of the Name of the Lord, *and make my boaſt of the Law, and yet through breaking the Law diſhonor God, Rom.* 2 23. If I live in the love of any ſin, and make uſe of my profeſſion to cover it, then am I an *hipocrit*, and my duties flow but from a natural conſcience: but on the other hand, If *I name the Name of the Lord Jeſus*, and withal *depart from iniquity, 2 Tim.* 2. 19. if I uſe duties, not to cover, but to diſcover and mortifie ſin, then I am upright before God, and my duties flow from a renewed conſcience.

4. *A natural man prides himſelf in his duties*; if he be much in duty, then he is much lifted up under duty; ſo did the *Phariſee, Luke* 18. 11, 12. *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are*; and why? here lay the difference? why? *I faſt twice in the week I give tythes of all, &c.*

But now take a gracious heart, a renewed conſcience, and when his duties are at higheſt, then is his heart at loweſt. Thus it was with the Apoſtle *Paul*, he was much in ſervice, *in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon 2 Tim.* 2. 4 preaching up the Lord Jeſus with all boldneſs and earneſtneſs, and yet very humble in a ſenſe of his own unworthineſs

under

unde- all; *I am not worthy to be called an Apoſtle, 1 Cor. 15. 9. To me who am leſs then the leaſt of all Saints, is this grace given, that I ſhould preach among the* Gentiles *the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, Eph* 3. 8. And again, *1 Tim.* 15. *Of ſinners I am chief.* Thus a Believer when he is higheſt in duties, then he is loweſt in humility; dutie puffeth up the hypocrit; but a Believer comes away humbled; and why? becauſe the hypocrit hath had no viſions of God: he hath ſeen only his own gifts and parts, and this exalteth him; but the Believer hath ſeen God, and enjoyed communion with God, and this humbleth him: Communion with God, though it be very refreſhing, yet it is alſo very abaſing and humbling to the creature. *Hierom* obſerveth on *Zeph.* 1. 1. where it is ſaid, that *Cuſhi* was *the ſon of* Gedaliah, *the ſon of* Amariah. That *Amariah* ſignifies *the Word of the Lord*; *Gedaliah* ſignifies *the greatneſs of the Lord*, and *Cuſhi* is interpreted *humility*, or my Æthiopian. So that, ſaith he, *from the Word of the Lord*, cometh a ſight of *the greatneſs of the Lord*, and from a ſight of *the greatneſs of the Lord*, cometh *humility.*

Now then, if I pride my ſelf in any duty, and am puffed up under my performances, then have I not ſeen nor met with *God* in any duty. But on the other hand, if when my gifts are at higheſt, my heart is at loweſt; if when my ſpirit is moſt raiſed, my heart is then moſt humbled; if in the midſt of all my ſervices I can maintain a ſenſe of my unworthineſs; if *Cuſhi* be the ſon of *Gedaliah*, then have I ſeen and had communion with God in duty, and my performances are from a renewed conſcience.

5. *Look*

5. *Look what that is to which the heart doth ſecretly render the glory of a duty, and what is the principle of the duty*; in *Hab.* 1. 16. ye read of them that *ſacrifice to their net, and burn incenſe to their drag*; where the glory of an *action* is rendered to a mans ſelf, the principle of that action is ſelf, all *rivers runnunto the ſea, Eccl.* 1. 7. that is an *argument* they came from the *ſea*; ſo when all a mans duties *terminat* in ſelf, then is ſelf the principle of all.

Now all the natural mans duties run into himſelf; he was never by a through work of grace truly caſt out of himſelf, and brought to deny himſelf; and therefore he can riſe no higher then himſelf in all he doth; he was never brought to be *pure in ſpirit*, and ſo to live upon another, to be carried out of all duties to Jeſus Chriſt.

But the Believer giveth the glory of all his ſervices to God, *Pſal.* 115. 1. whatever ſtrength or life there is in duty, God hath all the glory; for he is by grace outed of himſelf, and therefore ſeeth no excellency or worthineſs in himſelf.

I *labored more abundantly then they all*, ſaith the Apoſtle; but to whom doth he aſcribe the glory of this? to ſelf? No, *Yet not* I, ſaith he, *but the grace of God which was with me*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 10 When ever the grace of Chriſt is wrought in the heart as a principle of duty, you ſhal find the ſoul when it is moſt carried out, with a *yet not* I, in the mouth of it, I *live, yet not* I; I *labored more abundantly then all, yet not* I, *Gal.* 2. 20 ſelf is diſclaimed, & Chriſt moſt advanced, when it is from grace that the heart is quickned; the *twenty-four Elders caſt their Crowns at Chriſts feet, Rev.* 4. 10.

There are two things very hard; one is to take the ſhame of our ſins to our ſelves; the other is

is to give the glory of our services to Christ.

Now then, *if I sacrifice to my own net*, if I aim at my own credit or profit, and give the glory of all I do to self, then do *I sow to the flesh*, Gal 6. 8. and was never yet cast out of self, but act only from a natural conscience; but if I give the glory of all my strength and life in duty only to God, if I magnifie grace in all, and can truly say in all I do, *yet not* I, then am I truly cast out of self, and do what I do with a renewed conscience.

6. *Though a natural conscience may put a man much upon service, yet it never presseth to the attainment of holiness*; so that he carrieth an unsanctified heart under all; How long was *Judas* a professor, and yet not one dram of that grace he had got? *The foolish Virgins* (you know) *took their lamps, but took no oyl in their vessels*, Matt. 23. 3. that is, they looked more after a profession, then after sanctification.

But now when a renewed conscience putteth a man upon duty, it is succeeded with the growth of holiness; as grace helpeth to the doing of duty, so duty helpeth to the growing of grace: a believer is the more holy, and the more heavenly, by his being much in duties.

Now then, if I am much in a life of duties, and yet a stranger to a life of holiness; if I maintain a high profession, and yet have not a true work of sanctification; if (like children in the Rickets) I grow big in the head, but weak in the feet, then have I gifts and parts, but no grace; and though I am much in service, yet have I but a natural conscience; but on the other hand, if the holiness of my conversation carrieth a proportion to my profession, if I am not a *hearer of the word only*, but

but a doer of it; if grace groweth in [illegible]alons of duty then do I act in the things of God from a renewed conscience.

7. And lastly, *If a natural conscience be the spring of duty, why then runs this spring fastest at first, and so abateth, and at last driеth up?* But if a renewed conscience, a sanctified heart be the spring of duty, then this spring will never dry up, it will run alwayes, from first to last, and run quicker at the last then first. *I know thy works, and the last to be more then the first*; Rev. 2. 19. *The righteous shal hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shal be stronger and stronger*, Job 17. 9.

But you will say, Why doth that man abate and languish in his duties, that doth them from a natural conscience, more then he that doth them from a renewed conscience?

The reason is, because they grow upon a failable root, a decaying root, and that is nature: nature is a fading root, and so are all its fruits fading, but the duties done by a renewed conscience, are fruits that grow upon a lasting root, and that is Christ; *gifts have their root in nature, but grace hath its root in Christ*; and therefore the weakest grace, shal out-live the greatest gifts and parts, because there is life in the root of one, and not in the root of the other: gifts and grace differ like the leather of your shoo, and the skin of your feet: take a pair of shoos that have the thickest soles, and if you go much in them, the leather weareth out, and in a little time a mans foot cometh to the ground; but now a man that goeth bare-foot all his dayes, the skin of his feet doth not wear out; why should not the sole of his foot sooner wear out, then the sole of his shoo; for the

leather is much thicker then the skin? the reaſon is becauſe there is life in the one, and not in the other; there is life in skin of the foot, and therefore that holdeth out, and groweth thicker and thicker, harder and harder; but there is no life in the ſole of his ſhoo, and therefore that weareth out, and waxeth thinner and thinner; ſo it is with gifts and graces.

Now then, if I decay and abate, and grow weary of a profeſſion, and fall away at laſt; *If I begin in the ſpirit, and end in the fleſh*, then was all I did from a *natural conſcience*; but if I grow and hold out, if *I perſeuere to the end*, and my *laſt works be more then my firſt*, then do I act from a *renewed conſcience*.

And thus I have in ſeven things anſwered that queſtion, *viz.* If conſcience may go thus far in putting a man upon duties; then what difference is there between this natural conſcience in hypocrites and ſinners, and renewed conſcience in believers?

And that is the firſt anſwer to the mainquery, viz. *Whence is it that ſo many men go ſo far, as that they come to be almoſt Chriſtians?*

It is to anſwer the call of conſcience.

Secondly, *it is from the power of the Word under which they live*; though the Word doth not work effectually upon all, yet it hath a great power upon the hearts of ſinners to reform them, though not to renew them.

1. It hath *vim diſcriminationis*, a diſcerning, diſcovering power, *Heb.* 4. 12. *The Word of God is quick and powerful, ſharper then any two edged ſword, piercing to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a diſcer-*

diſcerner of the thoughts & intents of the heart. This is the glaſs where every man may ſee what manner of man he is, *Jam.* 1. 23. as the light of the Sun diſcovers the little motes, ſo the light of the Word ſhining into conſcience, diſcovers little ſins.

2. The Word hath *vim legiſlativam*, the power of a Law; it gives law to the whole ſoul, binds conſcience; it is therefore frequently called the Law in Scripture, *unleſs thy Law had been my delight, &c. Pſal.* 119. 92. *To the Law, and to the Teſtimony, Iſa.* 8. 20. this is ſpoken of the whole Word of God, which is therefore called a Law, becauſe of its binding power upon the conſcience.

3. It hath *vim judicativam*, a judging power: *Joh* 12. 48. *The word that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhal judge him at the laſt day*; the ſentence that God will paſs upon ſinners hereafter, is no other then what the word paſſeth upon them here; the judgement of God is not a day wherein God will paſs any new ſentence, but it is ſuch a day wherein God will make a ſolemn publick ratification of the judgement paſſed by the Miniſtery of the word upon ſouls here; this I gather clearly from *Matt.* 18. 18. *Whatſoever ye ſhal bind on earth, ſhal be bound in heaven; and whatſoever ye ſhal looſe on earth, ſhal be looſed in heaven*; ſo that by bringing a mans heart to the Word, and trying it by that, he may quickly know what that ſentence is that God will paſs upon his ſoul in the laſt day; for as the judgement of the word is now, ſuch will the judgement of God be concerning him in the laſt day.

Indeed there is a two-fold power further then this, in the word.

It hath *Vim Plasticam, & Vim Salvificam.*

A begetting . . . saving power; but this is put forth only upon some.

But the other is more extensive, and hath a great causality upon a profession of goodness, even among them that have no grace.

A man that is under this three-fold power of discerning Law and Judgement, that hath his heart *ransacked* and discovered, his conscience *bound* and *awed*, his state and sinful condition *judged* and *condemned*, may take up resolution of a new life, and convent himself to a great profession of Religion.

3. *A man may go far in this course of profession from affection of applause and credit, and to get a name in the world*, as it is said of the *Pharisees*, *They love to pray in the Market places, and in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men, Matt. 6. 5.*

Many are of *Machiavels* principle, that the appearence of vertue is to be sought, because though the use of it is a trouble, yet the credit of it is a help.

Jerome in his Epistle to *Julian*, calls such *populares in auræ vilia mancipia*, the base *bond slaves* of common Fame. Many a man doth that for credit, that he will not do for conscience, and owns *Religion* more for the sake of *lust*, then for the sake of Christ; thus making *Gods* stream to turn the *Devils Mill.*

Fourthly, *It is from a desire of salvation:* there is in all men a desire of salvation, it is natural to every being, to love and seek its own preservation; *who will show us any good? Psal. 4. 6.* This is the language of Nature seeking happiness, to its self.

Many a man may be carried so far out in the de-

sires

ſires of ſalvation, at to do many things to obtain it.

So did the *young man*, *Good Maſter, what good things ſhal I do that I may inherit eternal life?* he went far, and did much, obeyed many commands, and all out of a deſire of ſalvation: ſo then, put theſe together, and there is an anſwer to that queſtion.

The call of Conſcience.

The power of the Word.

The affection of credit: and

The deſire of Salvation.

Theſe may carry a man ſo far as to be almoſt a Chriſtian.

The third queſtion propounded, is this:

Queſt. Thirdly, *Whence is it that many are but almoſt Chriſtians, when they have gone thus far? what is the cauſe of this?*

Anſw. I might multiply anſwers to this queſtion, but I ſhal inſtance in two only, which I judge the moſt material.

First, *It is for want of right and ſound conviction*; if a man be not throughly convinced of ſin, and his heart truly broken, whatever his profeſſion of godlineſs may be, yet he will be ſure to miſcarry; every work of conviction is not a through work; there are convictions that are only natural and rational, but not from the powerful work of the Spirit of God.

Rational conviction, *is that which proceeds from the working of a natural conſcience, charging guilt from the light of nature, by the help of thoſe κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, thoſe common principles of reaſon that are in all men:* This is the conviction you read of *Rom.* 2. 14, 15. It is ſaid that the *Gentiles* who had not the Law, yet had their *conſcience bearing witneſs, and accuſing, or excuſing one another;*

though they had not the *light of Scripture*, yet had they conviction from the *light of nature*; now by the help of the Goſpel light, theſe convictions may be much improved, & yet the heart not renewed.

But then there is a ſpiritual conviction, and this is that work *of the ſpirit of God upon the ſinners heart by the Word, whereby the guilt & filth of ſin is fully diſcovered, and the wo and miſery of a natural ſtate, diſtinctly ſet home upon the conſcience, to the dread & terror of the ſinner, whilſt he abides in that ſtate and condition.*

And this is the conviction that is a ſound and through work; many have their convictions, but not this *ſpiritual conviction.*

Query. Now you will ſay, *Suppoſe I am at any time under conviction, how ſhal I know whether my convictions be only from a natural conſcience, or whether they be from the Spirit of God?*

Anſw. I ſhould digreſs too much to draw out the ſolution of this queſtion, to its juſt length; I ſhal therefore in five things only lay down, the moſt conſiderable difference between the one and the other.

1. *Natural convictions reach chiefly to open and ſcandalous ſins*, ſins againſt the light of nature; for *natural conviction* can *reach no farther* then *natural light.*

But *ſpiritual conviction* reaches to *ſecret, inward* and *undiſcerned* ſins, ſuch as *Hypocriſie, formalty, luke-warmneſs, deadneſs*, and *hardneſs of heart, &c.*

Obſerve then, whether your trouble for ſin, looks *inward* as well as *outward*, & reaches not only to open ſins, but to ſecret luſts to inward and ſpi-

spiritual sins; and if so, this is a sure sign of the work of the *Spirit*, because the trouble occasioned by these sins, bears a more immediate relation to the holiness of God, who only is offended by them, they being such as none else can see or know.

2. *Natural convictions deal only with a mans conversation*, not with his state and condition; with sins *actual*, not *original*: but *spiritual convictions* reach to all sins, to sins of heart, as well as sins of life, to the sin of our nature, as well as the sins of practise; to the sin that is born in us, as well as the sin that is done by us.

Where the Spirit of the Lord cometh to work effectually in a soul, he holdeth the glass of the Law before the sinners eyes, and openeth his eyes to look into the glass, and to see all that deformity and filthiness that is in his heart and nature.

The Apostle *Paul* said, *I had not known sin but by the Law, Rom.7.7.* How can this be true, that he had not known sin but by the Law, when as the light of nature discovers sin? It is said of the Gentiles, *That having not the Law, they are a law unto themselves, Rom.2.14.*

This sin therefore that the Apostle speaks of, is not to be understood of sin actual, but of sin original: I had not known the pollution of nature, that fountain of sin that is within, this I had not known but by the Law; and indeed this is a discovery that natural light cannot make; it is true the Philosopher could say, πάντων μὲν πρώτιστα κακὸν ἐπιθυμία ἐστὶν, *Timon apud Laertium*, that lust is the first and chief of all sins; but I cannot think he meant it of original sin, but of the *inordinacie of appetit and desire at most*; for I find that the wisest of the Philosophers,

understood nothing of original sin; hear *Seneca*; *Erras si tecum vitia nasci putas, supervenerunt, ingesta sunt*; sin is not born with thee, but brought in since. *Tam sine vitio quam sine virtute nascimur.*

Quintilian saith, It is more marvel that any one mans sins, then that all men should live honestly; sin is so against the nature of men, how blind were they in this point? and so was *Paul*, till the Spirit of the Lord discovered it to him by the Word. And indeed this is a discovery proper to the Spirit. It is he that makes the sinner see al the deformity and filthiness that is within; it is he that pulleth of all the sinners rags, and makes him see his naked and wretched condition; it is he that shows us the blindness of the mind, the stubbornness of the will, the disorderliness of the affections, the fearedness of the conscience, the plague of our hearts, and the sin of our natures, and therein the desperateness of our state.

3. *Natural convictions carry the soul out to look more on the evil that comes by sin, then on the evil that is in sin*; so that the soul under this conviction is more troubled at the dread of hell, and wrath, and damnation, then at the vileness and hainous nature of sin.

But now *spiritual convictions* work the soul into a greater sensibleness of the evil that is in sin, then of the evil that comes by sin; the dishonor done to God by walking contrary to his will, the wounds that are made in the heart of Christ, the grief that the holy Spirit of God is put to, this wounds the soul more then a thousand hells.

4. *Natural convictions are not durable, they are quickly worn out*; they are like a slight cut in the skin, that bleeds a little, and is sore for the present,

but

is healed again, and in a few daye• not so much as a scar to be seen.

But *spiritual convictions* are durable, they cannot be worn out, they abide in the soul till they have reached their end, (which is the *change* of the *sinner.*)

The *convictions* of the spirit are like a deep wound in the flesh that goes to the bond, and seems to endanger the life of the Patient, and is not healed but with great skill; and when it is healed, leaves a scar behind it; that when the Patient is well, yet he can say, *Here is the mark of my wound which will never wear out.*

So a soul that is under *spiritual conviction*, his wound is deep, and not to be healed but by the great skill of the heavenly Physician; and when it is healed, there are the *tokens* of it remaining in the soul, that can never be worn out; so that the soul may say, *Here are the marks and signs of my conviction still in my soul. Una tadémque manus vulnus apemque tulet.*

5. *Natural convictions make the soul shy of God*; guilt work fear, & fear causes estrangedness; thus it was with *Adam*, *Gen.* 3. 18. when he saw his nakedness, he ran away and hid himself from God.

Now spiritual convictions drive not the soul from God, but unto God: *Ephraims* conviction was spiritual, & he runs to God; *Turn thou me, & I shal be turned*, Jer. 3. 18. So that there is, you see, a great difference between *conviction* & *conviction*; between that which is natural, and that which is spiritual; that which is common, and that which is saving.

Yea, such is the difference, that though a man hath never so much of the former, yet if he be

without the latter, he is but *almost a Christian*; and therefore we have great reason to enquire more after this spiritual conviction. For,

1. *Spiritual conviction is an essential part of sound conversion*: conversion begins here; true *conversion* begins in *convictions*, and true *convictions* end in *conversion*.

Till the sinner be convinced of sin, he can never be converted from sin: Christs coming was as a Savior, to die for sinners, & the Spirits coming is to convince us as sinners, that we may close with Christ as a Savior; till sin be throughly discovered to us, interest in the blood of Christ cannot rightly be claimed by us: nay, so long as sin is unseen, Christ will be unsought, *They that be whole, need not the Physician, but they that are sick, Matt.* 9. 12.

2. *Slight and common convictions*, (when they are but skin-deep) *are the cause of much hypocrisie*. Slight convictions may bring the soul to clasp about Christ, but not to close with Christ, and this is the guise of an hypocrit. I know no other rise and spring of hypocrisie, like this of slight convictions: this hath filled the Church of Christ with hypocrites.

Nay, it is not only the spring of hypocrisie, but it is also the spring of apostasie: what was the cause that *the seed was said to wither away? Matt.* 13. 5. 6. it was because *it had no depness of earth*. Where there is through conviction, there is a *depth of earth* in the heart; and there *the seed of the word grows*; but where convictions are slight and common, there the seed withers for want of depth; so that you see clearly in this one instance, whence it is that many are but almost Christians, when they have

have gone so far in Religion, *viz.* for want of sound convictions.

Secondly, (and this hath a near relation to the former) *It is for want of a through work of grace first wrought in the heart*; where this is not, all a mans following profession comes to nothing; that Scholar is never like to read well, that will needs be in his *Grammar*, before he is out of his *Primer*: Cloth that is not wrought well in the loom, will neither wear well, nor wear long, it will do little service; so that Christian, that doth not well come off the loom, that hath not a through work of grace in his heart, will never wear well, he will shrink in the wetting, & never do much service for God; it is not the pruning of a bad tree, will make it *bring forth good fruit*; but *the tree must be made good*, before the *fruit* can be *good*, *Matth.* 12. 23.

He that takes up a profession of Religion with an unbroken heart, will never serve Christ in that profession with his whole heart.

If there be not a true change in that mans heart, that yet goes far, & doth much in the wayes of God, to be sure he will either die an hypocrit or an apostat.

Look as in nature, if a man be not well born, but prove crooked or mishapen in the birth, why he will be crooked as long as he lives; you may bolster or stuff out his clothes to conceal it, but the crookedness, the deformity remains still; you may hide it, but you cannot help it, it may be covered, but it cannot be cured.

So it is in this case, if a man come into a profession of Religion, but be not right born; if he be not *begotten of God*, & *born of the Spirit*,

Joh. 3. 5. if th[illegible]e not a through work of grace in his heart, all his profession of Religion will never mend him; he may be bolstered out by a life of duties, but he will be but an hypocrit at last, for want of a through work at first; a form of godliness may cover his crookedness, but will never cure it.

A man can never be a true *Christian*, nor accepted of God, though in the highest profession of Religion, without a work of grace in the heart. For,

1. *There must be an answerableness in the frame of that mans heart (that would be accepted of God) to the duties done by him*; his spirit and affections within must carry a proportion to his profession without: prayer without faith, obedience to the Law given, without fear & holy reverence of the Law-giver, God abhors: Acts of *internal* Worship, must answer the duties of *external* Worship.

Now where there is not grace wrought in the heart, there can never be any proportion or answerableness in the frame of that mans heart, to the duties done by him.

2. *Those duties that find acceptance with God, must be done in sincerity.* God doth not take our duties by tale, nor judge of us according to the *frequency of our performances*, but according to the sincerity of our hearts in the performance. It is this that commends both the doery & the duty to God; with sincerity, God accepts the least we do; without sincerity, God rejects the most we do, or can do: This is that temper of spirit which God highly delights in, *Prov.* 11. 20. *They that are of a froward heart, are an abomination to the Lord; but such as are upright in their way are his delight*, 1 *Chron.* 29. 17.

The Apostle gives it a great *Epithet*, he calls it in the 2 *Cor.* 1, 12. εἰλικρινείᾳ θεοῦ, *the sincerity*

of

of God; that is such a sincerity as is his special work upon the soul, setting the heart right and upright before him in all his wayes.

This is the Crown of all our graces, and the commendation of all our duties; thousands perish and go to hell in the midst of all their performances and duties, meerly for want of a little sincerity of heart to God.

Now where there is not a change of state, a work of grace in the heart, there can be no sincerity to *God ward*; for this is not *quid proveniens à natura*, it is not an herb that grows in *natures* garden; the heart of man is naturally *deceitful, & desperately wicked*, *Jer.* 17. 9. more opposit to sincerity then to *any thing*: as things *corrupted*, carry a greater dissimilitude to what they were, then to any thing else which they never were.

God made man upright; now man voluntarily losing this, is become more dislike to himself then to any thing below himself: he is more like a lion, a wolf, a bear, a serpent, a toad, then to a man in innocency.

So that it is impossible to find sincerity in any soul, till there be a work of grace wrought there by the Spirit of God; and hence it is that a man is but *almost a Christian*, when he hath done all.

The fourth Question.

4. *What is the reason that many go no farther in the profession of Religion, then to be almost a Christian?*

1. *It is because they deceive themselves in the truth of their own condition*: they mistake their state, and think it good and safe, when it is bad and dangerous. A man may look upon himself as a member of Christ, and yet God may look upon

him as a veſſel of wrath; as a child of God by looking more upon his ſins then his graces, more upon his failings then his faith, more upon *in dwelling-luſts*, then *renewing-grace*, may think his caſe very bad, when yet it is very good; *I am black*, ſaith the Spouſe, *Cant.* 1. 5. and yet ſaith Chriſt, *O thou faireſt among women*, ver. 8. So the ſinner by looking more upon his duties then his ſins, may think he ſees his *name written in the book of life*, and yet be in the account of God a very reprobat.

There is nothing more common then for a man to *think himſelf ſomething*, *when he is nothing*, & ſo he *deceives himſelf*, *Gal* 6. 3. Many a man bleſſes himſelf in his intereſt in Chriſt, when he is indeed a ſtranger to him: many a man thinks his ſin pardoned, when, alace! he is ſtill in the *gall of bitterneſs, & bond of iniquity*, *Acts* 8. 23. many a man thinks he hath grace, when he hath none: *There is* (ſaith Solomon) *that makes himſelf rich, and yet hath nothing*, *Prov.* 13. 7. This was the very temper of *Laodicea*, *Thou ſayeſt*, *I am rich, and encreaſed with goods, and have need of nothing*, *and knoweſt not* (pray mind that) *that thou are wretched and miſerable, and poor; and naked*, *Rev.* 3. 17.

Thou knoweſt not) as bad as ſhe was, ſhe thought her ſtate *good*: as poor as ſhe was in grace, ſhe thought ſhe was rich: as miſerable and naked as ſhe was, yet ſhe thought ſhe had need of nothing. ¶

Now there are ſeveral riſes or grounds of this miſtake. I will name five to you.

Firſt, the deſperat deceitfulneſs of the heart of every natural man: *Supplantativum corpræ omni*, Jer. 17. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things*: the *Hebrew* is gnakob chalach mical, the word gnakob, is the ſame with *Jakobs* name: now you know he was a ſupplanter of his brother *Eſau*; he is rightly

called *Jacob*, ſaith he, *for he hath ſupplanted me theſe two times, Gen.* 27. 36.

So the word ſignifies to be *fraudulent, ſubtil, deceitful*, & *ſupplanting*. Thus is the heart of every natural man, *deceitful above all things*.

You read of the deceitfulneſs of the tongue, *Pſal.* 52.4. And of the deceitfulneſs of riches, *Matth.* 13. 22. And of the deceitfulneſs of beauty, *Prov.* 31. 30. And of the deceitfulneſs of friends, *Job* 6.15. But yet the heart is deceitful above them all; nay, you read of the deceitfulneſs of Satan, *Rev.* 20. 3. yet truly a mans heart is a greater deceiver then he: for he could never deceive a man, if his own heart did not deceive him.

Now it is from hence that a man preſumes upon the goodneſs of his caſe, from the deſperate treachery of his own heart.

How common is it for men to boaſt of the goodneſs of their hearts? I thank God, though I do not make ſuch a ſhow and pretence as ſome do, yet I have as good a heart as the beſt. O do but hear *Solomon* in this caſe, *He that truſteth in his own heart, is a fool, Prov.* 28.26. Will any wiſe man commit his money to a cut-purſe? Will he truſt a cheat? It is a good rule, μέμνητο ἀπιστεῖν, remember to diſtruſt: and it was *Auguſtins* prayer, *Domine, libera me à meipſo*. That man that truſts to his own heart, ſhal be ſure to find himſelf deceived at laſt.

Secondly, this miſtake ariſes from the pride of a mans ſpirit: there is a proud heart in every natural man: there was much of this pride in *Adams* ſin, and there is much of it in all *Adams* ſons. It is a radical ſin, & from hence ariſeth this over-weening opinion of a mans ſtate and condition. *Solomon* ſaith, *Be not righteous overmuch, Eccl.* 7. 16.

Au-

Augustin. sent 365. speaking occasionally of those words, saith, It is not *justitia sapiens*, but *superbia præsumentis*; not meant of the righteousness of the wise man, but of the pride of the presumptuous man. Now in this sense every carnal man is righteous overmuch, though he hath none of that righteousness which commends him to God (to wit, the righteousness of Christ) yet he hath too much of that righteousness which commends him to himself, and that is self-righteousness.

A proud man hath an eye to see his beauty, but not his deformity: his parts, but not his spots: his seeming righteousness, but not his real wretchedness.

It must be a work of grace that must show a man the want of grace. The haughty eye looks upwards; but the humble eye looks downward, and therefore this is the believers Motto, *The least of saints, the greatest of sinners*, Eph. 3 8. but the carnal mans Motto is, *I thank God I am not as other men*, Luke 18. 11.

Thirdly, many deceive themselves with common grace, in stead of saving, through that resemblance that is between them. As many take counterfeit money for currant coyn, so do too many take common grace for true. *In similibus facilis est deceptio.* *Saul* took the devil for *Samuel*, because he appeared in the mantle of *Samuel*, 1 *Sam.* 21. 14. so many take common grace for saving, because it is like saving grace: a man may be under a supernatural work, and yet fall short of a saving work; the first raiseth nature, the second only reneweth nature: though every saving work of the spirit be supernatural, yet every supernatu-

ral, yet every supernatural work of the spirit is not saving: and hence many deceive their own souls, by taking a *supernatural work* for a *saving work*.

Fourthly, many mistake a profession of Religion for a work of conversion, & an outside reformation for a sure sign of inward regeneration. If the out-side of the cup be washed, then they think all is clean, though it be never so foul within. This is the common *Rock* that so many souls split upon, to their eternal hazard, taking up a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, 2 *Tim.* 3. 5.

Fifthly, want of a home application of the Law of God to the heart and conscience, to discover to a man the true state and condition he is in.

Where this is wanting, a man will sit down short of a true work of grace; and will reckon his case better then it is. That is a notable passage which the Apostle hints concerning himself; *I was alive without the Law once, but when the Commandment came, sin revived and died, Rom.* 7. 9.

Here you have an account of the different apprehensions *Paul* had of his condition, with and without the word.

1. Here is his apprehension of his condition without the Word, *I was alive* (saith he) *without the Law*: *Paul* had the Law, for he was a *Pharisee*, and they had the *form of knowledge, and of the truth of the Law*; therefore when he saith, he was *without the Law*, you must not take him literally, but spiritually, he was without the power and efficacie of it upon his heart and conscience, convincing and awakening, and discovering sin; and so long as his was this case, he doubted not of his state, he was confident of the *goodness* of his con-

condition; this he hinted when he saith, *I was alive*: but then,

2. Here is his apprehension of his condition with the Word, and that is quite contrary to what it was before; *when the Commandment came* (saith he) *then sin revived, and I died*,

When the Word of the Lord came with power upon his soul, when the spirit of God set it home effectually upon his conscience, that is meant by *the coming of the Commandment, then sin revived, & I died*; that is, I saw the desperateness of my case, and the filthiness of all my selfrighteousness.

Then my hope ceased, and my confidence failed, and as before I thought my self alive, and my sin dead; so when God had awakened conscience by the Word, then I saw my *sin alive and powerful*, and my *self dead and miserable*.

So that this is the first reason why men go no farther in the profession of Religion, then to be *almost Christians*.

It is because their mistake their state, and think it good when it is not; which mistake hath a fivefold rise.

A deceitful heart.

A proud spirit.

Taking common grace for saving.

Outward Reformation, for true Regeneration.

Want of a home application of the Law of God to the heart and conscience.

Reas. 2. *It is from Satans cunning, who if he cannot keep sinners in their open prophanness, then he labors to perswade them to take up with a form of godliness*: If he cannot entice them on in their lusts, with a total neglect of heaven, then he entices them to such a profession as is sure to fall short

of

of heaven. He will conſent to the living ſome ſin, ſo as we do but keep the reſt; and to the doing ſome duties, ſo as we neglect the reſt: Nay, rather then part with his intereſt in the ſoul, he will yield far to our profeſſion of Religion, and conſent to any thing but our converſion, & cloſing with Chriſt for ſalvation: he cares not which way we come to hell, ſo as he gets us but thither at laſt.

Reaſ. 3. *It is from worldly and carnal policy*; this is a great hindrance to many; *policy* many times enters *caveats* againſt *piety*. *Jehu* will not part with his *calves*, leſt he *hazard his kingdom*.

Among many men there would be more zeal and honeſty, were there leſs deſign and policy. There is an honeſt policy that helps Religion, but carnal policy hinders it.

We are commanded *to be wiſe as ſerpents*, *Matth.* 10. 16. now *the ſerpent is the ſubtileſt of creatures*, *Gen.* 3. 1. but then we muſt be *innonocent as Doves*: if *Piety* be without *Policy*, it wants *ſecurity*; if *Policy* be without *Piety*, it wants *integrity*: *Piety without Policy*, *is too ſimple to be ſafe*; *and Policy without piety*, *is too ſubtil to be good*.

Let men be as wiſe, as prudent, as ſubtil, as watchful as they will; but then let it be in the way of God, let it be joyned with holineſs and entegrity.

That is a curſed wiſdom that forbids a man to lanch any further out in the depth of Religion, then he can ſee the land, leſt he be taken in a ſtorm, before he can make ſafe to ſhore again.

Reaſ. 4. *There is ſome luſt eſpouſed in the heart, that hinders a hearty cloſe with Chriſt*: though they bid fair, yet they come not to Gods term; the

the *young man would have eternal life, Mat.* 19.20. and he bids fair for it, a willing obedience to every command but one: but only one, and will not God abate him one? is he so severe? will he not come down a little in his terms, when man rises so high? must man yield all? will God yield nothing?

No, my brethren, he that underbids for heaven, shal as surely lose it, as he that will give nothing for it: he that will not give all he hath, *part with all for the pearl of price, Matth.* 13. 45, 46. shal as surely go without it, as he that never once cheapens it.

The not coming up to Gods terms, is the ruine of thousands of souls; nay, it is that upon which all that perish do perish; a naked sinner to a naked Christ, a bleeding broken sinner, to a bleeding broken Christ; these are Gods terms.

Most professors are like iron between two equal Loadstones; God draws, and they propend towards God; & the world draws, and they incline to the world; they are between both, they would not leave God for the World, if they might not be engaged to leave the world for God.

But if they must part with all, with every lust, every darling, every beloved sin, why then the spirit of *Demas* possesses them, and God is forsaken by them. 2 *Tim.* 4. 10.

My brethren, this is the great reason why many that are come to be almost Christians, go no farther; some one beloved lust or other hinders them and after a long and high profession, parts them and Christ for ever, they *did run well, Gal.* 5.7. but here it is that they give out, and after all fall short, and perish to eternity.

Thus

Thus having answered these four questions, to wit:

1. *How far a man may go in the way to heaven, and yet be but* almost a Christian?

2. *Whence is it that a man goeth so far as to be* almost a Christian?

3. *Whence is it that a man is but* almost a Christian, *when he hath gone thus far?*

4. *What is the reason men go no farther in Religion, then to be* almost a Christians?

I proceed now to the application.

1. *That salvation is not so easie a thing as it is imagined to be*; this is attested by our Lord Christ himself, *Matth.* 7.14. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, & few there be that find it. The gate of conversion is a very strait gate,* and yet every man that would be saved eternally, must enter in at this *strait gate*; for salvation is impossible without it. *Except a man be born again* (ἄνωθεν born from above) *he cannot see the Kingdom of God, John* 3.3.

Not that this gate is strait simply, and in respect of it self: no, for converting grace is free, the *gate of mercy stands open all the day long*: in the tenders of Gospel grace, none are excluded, unless they exclud themselves, *Matth.* 22.3,5. *Acts* 13.46. Christ doth not say, If such and such will come to me, I will not cast them out; but *him that cometh unto me (be he who or what he will, if he have a heart to close with me) I will in no wise cast him out, John* 6.37. he saith not, if this or that man will, here is water of life for him; buy, *if any man will, let him take the water of live freely, Rev.* 22.17. Christ grudgeth mercy to none: though salvation was dearly *purchased* for us, yet it is freely *proffered* to us.

So

So that the *gate which leadeth to life*, is not strait on Christs part, or in respect of its self, but it is strait in *respect* of us, because of our lusts and corruptions, which make the *entrance* difficult; a needles eye is big enough for a *threed* to pass through; but it is a strait passage for a cable rope; either the *needles* eye must be enlarged, or the cable *rope* must be untwisted, or the entrance is impossible. So it is in this case; the gate of conversion is a very strait passage for a carnal corrupt sinner to go in at: the soul can never pass through with any one lust beloved and espoused; and therefore the sinner must be untwisted from every lust: he must lay aside the love of every sin, or he can never enter in at this gate, for it is a strait gate. And when he is in at this strait gate, he meeteth with a narrow way to walk in: so our Lord Christ saith, *Narrow is the way that leadeth to life*; and what way is this but the way of sanctification? *for without holiness, no man shal ever see the Lord*, *Heb.* 12. 14.

Now this way of sanctification is a very narrow way; for it lyes over the neck of every lust, and in the exercise of every grace, subduing the one, and improving the other. Dying daily, and yet living daily; dying to sin, and living to God, this is the way of sanctification: and oh! how few are there who walk in this way! the broad way hath many travellers in it; but this narrow way is like the wayes of *Canaan* in the dayes of *Shamgar*; it is said, *Judg.* 5. 6. *in the dayes of Shamgar the son of Anath, the high wayes were unoccupyed, and the travellers walked through by wayes*; in the *Hebrew* it is *Achavoth gnakal keloth*, *though crooked wayes*: the way of *holiness* is by the most an unoccupyed

way, so saith the Prophet, *Isa.* 53.8.9. *A way shal be there, and it shal be called the way of holiness, the unclean shal not pass over it; no Lion shal be there, nor any ravenous beast shal go up thereon, but the redeemed shal walked there:* The unclean, and the Lion, and the ravenous beast, they are in the crooked wayes: none but the redeemed of the Lord walk in the way of the Lord.

It is no wonder then, that our Lord Christ saith of life, that *few there be that find it*, when as the *gate is strait*, and *the way narrow*, that leadeth to it: many pretend to walk in the *narrow way*, but they never entred in at the *strait gate*: and many pretend to have entred in at the strait gate, but they walk not in the narrow way. *Ad cæleste Regnum pauci deducuntur.*

It is a very common thing for a man to perish upon a mistake of his way, to go on in those paths that take hold of hell, and yet hope to find heaven at last; those twenty paths fore-mentioned run into destruction, and yet many choose them, and walk in them as the way of salvation. As many profane and open sinners perish by choosing *the way of death*, so many formal professors perish *by mistaking the way of life*: this I gather from that our Lord Christ saith, *Few there be that find it*; which doth clearly imply, what in *Luk.* 13.24. he doth plainly express, to wit, that many seek it, *many seek to enter in, and yet are not able*; many run fast, and yet do not so run as to obtain: many bid fair for the *Pearl of Price*, and yet go without it: Hell is had with easie, but *the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, Matt* 11.12. *Facilius discensu Averni; Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras ... hoc opus est.*

2. If

2. *If many go thus far in the way to Heaven, and yet miſcarry; Oh, then, what ſhal be the end of them who fall ſhort of theſe?* If he ſhal periſh who is *almoſt a Chriſtian*? what ſhal he do, who is not at all a Chriſtian? If he that owneth *Chriſt*, and profeſſeth *Chriſt*, and leaveth many ſins for *Chriſt*, may be damned notwithſtanding; what then ſhal his doom be, who diſowneth *Chriſt*, and refuſeth to part with one ſin, one luſt, one oath for Chriſt; *nay*, that *openly* blaſpemeth the precious name of *Chriſt*? If he that is *outwardly ſanctified*, ſhal yet be eternally rejected, what will the caſe be of ſuch as are *openly unſanctified*, that have not only the *Plague* of an *hard heart* within, but alſo the *plague ſores* of a profane life without? If the *formal profeſſor* muſt be ſhut out, ſurely then the *filthy adulterer*, *ſwiniſh drunkard*, *the cheap ſwearer*; the *the prophane ſabbath breaker*. *the ſoulmouthed ſcoffer*, yea, and every carnal ſinner *much more*: if there be a *wo* to *him* that *falleth ſhort of heaven*, then *how ſad* is the *wo* to him who falls ſhort of them that fall ſhort of Heaven? Ah, that God would make this an awakening word to ſinners that are aſleep in ſin; without the *leaſt fear of death*, *or dread of damnation*!

Are there many in the world, that are *almoſt*, and yet but *almoſt Chriſtians*? why *then it is time for us to call our own condition into queſtion*; *and to make a more narrow ſcrutiny into the trunk of our ſpiritual eſtate*; what it is, whether it be right or no; whether we are ſound and ſincere in our profeſſion of Religion, or no? When our Lord Chriſt told his diſciples, *One of you ſhal betray me*, every one began preſently to reflect upon himſelf; *Maſter, is it I? Maſter, is it I?* So [illegible]

when the Lord discovers to us from his word, how many there are under the profession of Religion that are but almost Christians, we should straight way reflect upon our heart, *Lord, is it I?* is my heart unsound? am I but *almost a Christian*? am I one of them that shal miscarry at last? am I an hypocrit under a profession of Religion? have I a form of godliness without the powet?

There are two questions of very great importance, which we should every one of us often put to our selves.

What am I? Where am I?

1. *What am I?* am I a child of God or not? am I sincere in *Religion*, or am I only an hypocrit under a *profession*?

2. *Where am I?* am I yet in a natural state, or in a state of grace? am I yet in the old root, in old *Adam*, or am I in the root Christ Jesus? am I in the covenant of works, that ministers only wrath and death? or am I in the covenant of grace, that ministers life and peace?

Indeed this is the first thing a man should look at: there must be a change of state, before there can be a change of heart: we must come under a change of covenant, before we can be under a change of condition: For the *new heart*, and the *new spirit* is promised the *new covenant*; there is nothing of that to be heard of in the *old*; now a man must be under the *new covenant*, *Ezek.* 36. 36. before he can receive the blessing promised in the *new covenant*: he must be in a *new covenant state*, before he can receive *a new covenant heart*: no mercy, no pardon, no change, no conversion, no grace dispensed out of covenant: therefore this should be our great inquiry: for if we know not

where we are, we cannot know what we are: & if we know not what we are, we cannot be what we should be, *to wit*, *altogether Christians*. Let me then, I beseech you, press this duty upon you that are *professors*, try *your own hearts*, *examine your selves whether you are in the faith*, *prove your own souls*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 5. I urge this upon most cogent arguments.

1. *Because many rest in a notion of godliness, and outward shows of Religion*, *and yet remain in their natural condition*: many *are hearers of the Word*, but not *doers of it*, and so *deceive their own souls*, *Jam.* 1. 22. some neither *hear* nor *do*, these are prophane sinners: some both *hear* and *do*, these are true believers: some *hear*, but they do not *do*, these are hypocrital professors.

He that slights the ordinances, cannot be a true Christian; but yet it is possible a man may own them, & profess them, & yet be no true Christian, who would trust to a profession, that shal see *Judas* a Disciple, an Apostle, a Preacher of the Gospel, one that casts out Devils, to be cast out himself, *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly*, *neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew*, *which is one inwardly*, *and circumcision is that of the heart*, *in the spirit*, *and not the letter*, *whose praise is not of men*, *but of God*, *Rom.* 2. 28.

2. *Because errors in the first foundation are very dangerous*: if we be not right in the main, in the fundamental work; if the foundation be not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profession comes to nothing; the house is built upon a sandy foundation, and though it may stand for a while, yet *when the floods come*, *and the winds blow and beat*

beat upon it, great will be the fall of it, Matt. 7. 17.

3. *Becauſe many are the deceits that our ſouls are liable in this caſe:* there are many things like grace, that are not grace: now it is the likeneſs and ſimilitude of things that deceives and makes one thing to be taken for another, *In ſimilibus facilis eſt deceptio.*

Many take gifts for grace, common knowledge, for ſaving knowledge, when as a man may have great gifts, and yet no grace, great knowledge, and yet not know Jeſus Chriſt.

Some take common faith for ſaving; when as a man may believe all the truths of the Goſpel, all the promiſes, all the threatnings, all the Articles of the Creed to be true, and yet periſh for want of ſaving faith.

Some take morality and reſtraining grace, for piety and renewing grace; when as it is common to have ſin much reſtrained, where the heart is not at all renewed.

Some are deceived with a half work, taking conviction for converſion; reformation for regeneration: We have many Mermaid Chriſtians.

Definit in piſcem mulier formoſa ſuperna.

Or like *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, head of gold, and feet of clay, *Dan.* 2. 32, 33. The Devil cheats moſt men by a *Synecdoche*, putting a part for the whole; partial obedience to ſome commands, for univerſal obedience to all. Endleſs are the deluſions that Satan faſtens upon ſouls, for want of this ſelf-ſearch: It is neceſſary therefore, that we try our ſtate, leſt we take the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, & imbrace a cloud in ſtead of *Juno.*

4. *Satan will try us at one time or other*; he will winnow us and ſift us to the bottom, *Luke* 2. 13.

and if we now rest in a groundless confidence will then end in a comfortless despair.

Nay, God himself will search and try us at the the day of judgement especially; and who can abide that tryal, that never tryes his own heart?

5. *Whatsoever a mans state be, whether he be altogether a Christian or no, whether his principles be sound or no yet it is good to examine his own heart, Gal.6.4.* If he find his heart good, his principles right and sound, this will be matter of rejoycing; if he find his heart rotten, his principles false and unsound, the discovery is in order to a renewing; if a man have a disease upon him and know it, he may send to the Physician in time; but what a sad vexation will it be, not to see a disease till it be past cure? so for a man to be graceless, and not see it till it be too late, to think himself a Christian when he is not and that he is in the right way to heaven, when he is in the ready way to hell, and yet not know it till a dearth-bed, or a judgement-day confute his confidence; this is the most irrecoverable misery.

These are the grounds upon which I press this duty, of examening our state? O that God would help us in the doing this necessary duty?

Quest. You will say, *But how shal I come to know whether I am almost, or altogether a Christian?* If a man may go so far, and yet miscarry, how shal I know when my foundation is right, when I am a Christian indeed?

Answ. 1. *The altogether Christian closes with, and accepts of Christ upon Gospel, terms?* True union makes a true Christian: many close with Christ, but it is upon their own terms; they take him and own him, but not as God offers him. The terms

upon

upon which God in the Goſpel offers Chriſt, are, that we ſhal accept of a broken Chriſt with a broken heart, and yet a whole Chriſt with a whole heart.

A broken Chriſt with a *broken heart*, as a witneſs of our *humility*; a whole Chriſt with the whole heart, as a witneſs of our ſincerity. A broken Chriſt reſpects his ſuffering for ſin, a broken heart reſpects our ſenſe of ſin: a whole Chriſt includes all his offices, a whole heart includes all our faculties. Chriſt is a King, Prieſt, and Prophet, and all as Mediator: without any one of theſe offices, the work of ſalvation could not have been compleated. As a Prieſt he redeems us; as a Prophet, he inſtructs us; as a King, he ſanctifies and ſaves us: Therefore the Apoſtle ſaith, 2 *Cor.* 1. 30. *He is made to us of God, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption.* Righteouſneſs and redemption flow from him, as a Prieſt; wiſdom, as a Prophet; ſanctification, as a King.

Now many imbrace Chriſt as a Prieſt, but yet they own him not as a King & Prophet: they like to ſhare in his righteouſneſs, but not to *partake* of his holineſs: they would be redeemed by him, but they would not ſubmit to him: they would be ſaved by his blood, but not ſubmit to his power. Many love the priviledges of the Goſpel, but not the duties of the Goſpel. Now theſe are but almoſt Chriſtians, notwithſtanding their cloſe with Chriſt; for it is upon their own terms, but not upon Gods. The Offices of Chriſt may be diſtinguiſhed, but they can never be divided.

But the true Chriſtian owns Chriſt in all his Offices: he doth noth only cloſe with him as Jeſus, but as *Lord Jeſus*; he ſaith with *Thomas*, *My*

Lord, and my God, John 20. 28. He doth not only believe in the merit of his death, but also conforms to the manner of his life: as he believes in him, so he lives to him: he takes him for his wisdom, as well as for his righteousness; for his sanctification, as well as his redemption.

2. *The altogether Christian hath a through work of grace and sanctification wrought in the heart, as a spring of duties.* Regeneration *is a whole change: all old things are done away, and all things become new,* 2 *Cor.* 5. 11. It is a perfect work as to parts, though not as to degrees. Carnal men do duties, but they are from an unsanctified heart, and that spoils all. *A new piece of cloth* never doth well *in an old garment,* for the *rent, is but made worse, Matth.* 9 16. When a mans heart is throughly renewed by grace, the mind savingly enlightned, the conscience throughly convinced, the will truly humbled and subdued, the affections spiritually raised and sanctified: and when mind, and will, and conscience, and affections, all joyn issue to help on with the performance of the duties commanded, then is a man *altogether a Christian.*

3. *He that is altogether a Christian, looks to the manner, as well as the matter of his duties;* not only that they be done, but how they be done. He knows the Christians privileges ly in *pronouns*, but this duty in *adverbs*; it must not be only *bonum, good,* but it must be *bene,* that good must be rightly done.

Here the *almost Christian* fails, he doth the same duties that others do for the matter, but he doth them not in the same manner: while he minds the substance, he regards not the circumstance: If he pray, he regards not *faith* and *fervency* in prayer, *James* 5. 16. if he hear, he doth not mind Christs rule.

rule. *Take heed how ye hear*, Luke 8.18. if he obeys he looks not to the frame of his he..t, Rom. 6.17. in obeying, and therefore miscarries in all he doth; *bonum oritur ex integra causa; malum ex quolibet defectu*; any of these defects spoyl the good of every duty.

4. *The altogether Christian is known by his sincerity in all his performances.* Whatever a man doth in the duties of the Gospel, he cannot be a Christian without sincerity. Now the *almost Christian* fails in this; for though he doth much, prays much, hears much, obeys much, yet he is an hypocrit under all.

5. *He that is altogether a Christian, hath an answerableness within to the law without.* There is a connaturalness between the Word of God, and the will of a Christian: his heart is (as it were) the transcript of the Law: the same holiness that is commanded in the Word, is implanted in his heart: the same conformity to Christ that is enjoyned by the Word of God, is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God: the same obedience which the Word requireth of him, the Lord enableth to perform by his grace bestowed on him. This is that which is promised in the new covenant, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, Jer. 31.33. Heb. 9.10. and 10.16. Now the writing his Law in us, is nothing else but his working that grace and holiness in us which the Law commandeth and requireth of us.

In the old covenant administration, God wrote his Laws only upon tables of stone, but not upon the heart; and therefore though God wrote them, yet they broke them; but in the new covenant administration, God provides new tables, *not*

tables of stone, but the fleshly tables of the heart, 2 *Cor.* 3. 3. and writes his laws there, that there might be νόμος ἐγγράπτος, a law within, answerable to the law without, and this every true Christian hath; so that he may say (in his measure) as our Lord Christ did, *I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy Law is in my heart, Psal.* 40, 8, every believer hath a light within him, not guiding him to despise & slight, but to prize and walk by the light without him: the Word commands him to walk in the light, and the light directs him to walk according to the Word.

Moreover from this impression of the law upon the heart, obedience & conformity to God, becomes the *choice* and *delight* of the soul, for holiness is the *very nature* of the *new creature*; so that if there were *no Scripture*, *no Bible*, to guide him, yet he would be *holy*, for he hath received *grace for grace*, there is a *grace within* to answer to the *word* of *grace without*, *John* 1. 16.

Now the *almost Christian* is a stranger to this law of God within; he may have some conformity to the word in outward conversation, but he cannot have his answerableness to the word in inward constitution.

6. *The altogether Christian is much in duty, and yet much above duty*; much in duty in regard of performances, much above duty in regard of dependence: much in duty by obeying, but much above duty by believing. He lives in his obedience, but he doth not live upon his obedience, but upon Christ & his righteousness.

The almost Christian fails in this: he is much in duty but not above it, but rests in it; he works for rest, and he rests in his works; he cannot come

to

to believe and obey too; if he believes, then he thinks there is no need of obedience, and so casts of that, if he be much in obedience, then he casts off believing, and thinks there is no need of that. He cannot say with *David*, *I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy Commandments*, *Psalm* 119. 166.

The more a man is in duty, and the more above it, the more in doing, and more in *believing*, the *more a Christian.*

7. *He that is altogether a Christian, is universal in his obedience*; he doth not obey one command and neglect another; do one duty and cast off another, but he hath respect to all the commands; *Psa.* 119. 6. he endeavors to leave every sin, and love every duty.

The *almost Christian* fails in this; his obedience is partial and piece meal: if he obeys one command, he breaks another, the duties that least cross his lust, he is much in; but those that do, he lays aside.

The *Pharisees fasted, prayed, paid tythes, &c. Matt.* 23. 23. but they did not lay aside their *covetousness*, their *oppression*, they *devoured widows houses*, they *were unnatural to parents*, *Mat.* 3. 14.

8. *The altogether Christian makes Gods glory the chief end of all his performances*; If he prayes, or hears, or gives, or fasts, or repents, or obeyes, *&c.* Gods glory is the main end of all; it is true, he may have somewhat else at hitherend of his work, but God is at the further end; as *Moses Rod* swallowed up the *Magicians Rods*, so Gods glory is the ultimat end that swallows up all his other ends. Now the *almost Christian* fails in this his ends are corrupt and selfish; *God* may possibly be at the

hither end of the *work*, but self is at the further end, for he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end then himself.

Now then examine thy self by these characters; put the question to thy own soul, dost thou close with Christ upon Gospel-terms, *is grace* in the *heart* the principle of thy performances? dost thou look to the manner, as well as the matter of thy duties? dost thou do all in sincerity? is there an answerableness within to the law without? art thou much above duty? when much in duty? is thy obedience universal? Lastly, is Gods glory the end of all? If so, then art thou not only almost, but altogether a Christian.

Oh, take heed of being almost, and yet but almost a Christian. It is a great complaint of God against *Ephraim*, *Hos.* 7. 8. *That he is a cake not turned*; that is, *half baked*, neither *raw* nor *roasted*, οὐκ ἐστὶ ψυχρὸς, οὐκ ζεστὸς, neither *cold* nor *hot*, as *Laodicea*, *Rev.* 3. 17. *Because thou art neither hot nor cold, therefore I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

This is a condition that of all others is *greatly unprofitable, exceedingly uncomfortable*; and *desperately dangerous.*

First, *it is greatly unprofitable to be but almost a Christian*; for failing in any one point will ruin us, as surely as if we had never made any attempts for heaven. It is no advantage to the soul, to be almost converted; for the little that we want, spoyls the good of all our attainments: we say, as good never a whit, as never the near; *ad nihilum valet quod non valet ad finem suum*: there is no profit in leaving this or that sin, unless we leave all sin. *Deus non vult exceptione coli. Herod* heard *John* gladly

gladly, and did many things; but he kept his *Herodias*, and that ruined him. Judas did many things, prayed much, preached much, professed much, but yet his coveteousness spoyled all: one sin ruined the young man, that had kept all the commands but one. Thus he *that offends in one point, is guilty of all*, James 2. 10. That is, that lives willingly and allowedy in any one sin, he brings the guilt of the violation of the whole Law of God upon his soul, and that upon a two-fold account.

1. Because he manifests the same contempt of the authority of God, in the wilful breach of one, as of all.

2. By allowing himself in the breach of any one command, he shows he kept none in obedience and conscience to God: for he that hates sin, as sin, hates all sin; and he that obeys the command as the expres will of God, obeys every command. And for this cause; the least sin willingly, and with allowance lived in, spoyls the good of all our obedience, and lays the soul under the whole wrath of God. One leak in a ship may sink her, though she be right every where else: *Jud.* 8. 33. 31. *compared with ch.* 9. *v.* 5. *Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard*, and yet that *one bastard destroyed all his sons:* so may one sin spoil all our services: one lust beloved may spoil all our profession, as that one bastard slew all the sons of *Gideon*.

Secondly, *it is exceedingly uncomfortable*, as appears three ways.

1. *In that such a one is hated of God & men:* The world hates him, because of his profession, and God abhors him, because of his dissimulation:

hither end of his *work*, but self is at the further end, for he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end then himself.

Now then examine thy self by these characters; put the question to thy own soul, dost thou close with Christ upon Gospel-terms, *is grace* in the *heart* the principle of thy performances? dost thou look to the manner, as well as the matter of thy duties? dost thou do all in sincerity? is there an answerableness within to the law without? art thou much above duty? when much in duty? is thy obedience universal? Lastly, is Gods glory the end of all? If so, then art thou not only almost, but altogether a Christian.

Oh, take heed of being almost, and yet but almost a Christian. It is a great complaint of God against *Ephraim*, *Hos.* 7.8. *That he is a cake not turned*; that is, *halfbaked*, neither *raw* nor *roasted*, οὔτε ψυχρὸς, οὔτε ζεστὸς, neither *cold* nor *hot*, as *Laodicea*, *Rev.* 3. 17. *Because thou art neither hot nor cold, therefore I will spow thee out of my mouth.*

This is a condition that of all others is *greatly unprofitable*, *exceedingly uncomfortable*, and *desperately dangerous.*

First, *it is greatly unprofitable to be but almost a Christian*; for failing in any one point will ruin us, as surely as if we had never made any attempts for heaven. It is no advantage to the soul, to be almost converted; for the little that we want, spoyls the good of all our attainments: we say, as good never a whit, as never the near; *ad nihilum valet quod non valet ad finem suum*: there is no profit in leaving this or that sin, unless we leave all sin. *Deus non vult exceptione coli.* *Herod* heard *John* gladly

gladly, and did many things; but he kept his *Herodias*, and that ruined him. Judas did many things, prayed much, preached much, professed much, but yet his covetousness spoyled all: one sin ruined the young man, that had kept all the commands but one. Thus he *that offends in one point, is guilty of all*, James 2. 10. That is, that lives willingly and allowedy in any one sin, he brings the guilt of the violation of the whole Law of God upon his soul, and that upon a two-fold account.

1. Because he manifests the same contempt of the authority of God, in the wilful breach of one as of all.

2. By allowing himself in the breach of any one command, he shows he kept none in obedience and conscience to God: for he that hates sin, as sin, hates all sin; and he that obeys the command as the expres will of God, obeys every command. And for this cause; the least sin willingly, and with allowance lived in, spoyls the good of all our obedience, and lays the soul under the whole wrath of God. One leak in a ship may sink her, though she be right every where else: *Jud.* 8. 33. 31. *compared with ch.* 9. *v.* 5. *Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard*, and yet that *one bastard destroyed all his sons:* so may one sin spoil all our services: one lust beloved may spoil all our profession, as that one bastard slew all the sons of *Gideon.*

Secondly, *it is exceedingly uncomfortable*, as appears three ways.

1. *In that such a one is hated of God & men:* The world hates him, because of his profession, and God abhors him, because of his dissimulation:

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Secondly, *it is exceedingly uncomfortable*, as appears three ways.

1. *In that such a one is hated of God & men:* The world hates him, because of his profession, and God abhors him, because of his dissimulation:

the world hates him, becauſe he ſeems good, and God hates him, becauſe he doth but ſeem ſo. No perſon that God hates more then the almoſt Chriſtian; *I would thou were either cold or hot, Rev. 3. 15. verſe 6. either all a Chriſtian*, or not *at all Chriſtian. Tepida evomere conſuevimus, unde ad vomitum ciendum, quidam aqua tepida utuntur. Becauſe thou art neither cold nor hot, therefore I will ſpow thee out of my mouth.* What a loathſome expreſſion doth God here uſe, to ſhew what an utter abhorrency there is in him againſt luke-warm Chriſtians.

How uncomfortable then muſt that condition needs be, wherein a man is abhorred both of God and man?

2. *It is uncomfortable in regard of ſufferings*: for being *almoſt a Chriſtian*, will bring us into ſuffering; but being *but almoſt a Chriſtian*, will never carry us through ſuffering, in *Matt.* 13. 20, 21. it is ſaid, *He that receiveth the ſeed into ſtony ground, the ſame is he that hears the word, and with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, by and by he is offended.*

There are four things obſervable in the words.

1. That the ſtony ground may receive the word with joy.

2. That it may for ſome time abide in a profeſſion of it, *he dureth for a while.*

3. That this profeſſion will expoſe to ſuffering, for mark, perſecution is ſaid to ariſe becauſe of the Word.

4. This ſuffering will cauſe an apoſtatizing from profeſſion; for that which is here called offence, is in *Luke* 8. 13. called falling away, *which for a while*

be-

believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

I gather hence, a profeſſion may expoſe a man as much to ſuffering, as the power of godlineſs; but without the power of godlineſs there is not holding out in a profeſſion under ſuffering. The world hates the ſhow of godlineſs, and therefore perſecutes it; *the almoſt Chriſtian wants the ſubſtance, and therefore cannot hold it.*

Now this muſt needs be very uncomfortable; if I profeſs Religion, I am like to ſuffer, if I do but profeſs it, I am never like to endure.

3. *It is uncomforteable in regard of that deceit it lays our hopes under:* to be deceived of our hopes, cauſeth ſorrow as well as ſhame; he that is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, hopes for heaven; but unleſs he be *altogether a Chriſtian*, he ſhall never come there.

Now to periſh with hope of *heaven*, to go to *hell* by the gates of glory; to come to the very door, and then be *ſhut out*, as the *five virgins were*, *Matt.* 25. 10. to die in the wilderneſs, within the ſight of the promiſed land, at the very brink of *Jordan*, this muſt needs be ſad: to come within a ſtride of the goal, & miſs it; to ſink within ſight of harbor; oh, how uncomfortable is this?

3, *As it is greatly unprofitable, and exceedingly uncomfortable to be but almoſt a Chriſtian, ſo it is deſperately dangerous:* For:

1. *This doth obleem ponere, it hinders the true work*; a man lyes in a fairer capacity for converſion, that lyes in open enmity and rebellion, then he ſoots up himſelf in the formalities of *religion*. This I gather from that Parable of the two ſons which our Lord Chriſt urged to the profeſſing Scribes and *Phariſees*, *Matt.* 21. 28. to 32.

There was a man had two ſons, and he came to

one said, Go work to day in my vineyard; he said, I will not; but afterwards repented and went.

And he came to the second, and said likewise; and he said, *I go Sir, but went not.*

The first represents the carnal open sinner, that is called by the Word, but refuses, yet afterwards repents, and believes. The second represents the hypocrital professor, that pretends much, but performs little. Now mark how Christ applies this parable, *v.* 31. *Verily I say unto you that the Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

And upon this account it is better not to be at all, then to be almost a Christian; for the almost hinders the altogether. It is better (in this regard, to be a sinner without a profession, then to be a professor without conversion; for the one lyes fairer, for an inward change, when the other rests is an outward. Our Lord Christ tells the *Scribe, Mar* 12.34. *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, and yet never like to come there. None farther from the Kingdom of God then such as are not far from the Kingdom of God. As for instance, when there lyes but one lust, one sin between a soul and Christ, that soul is not far from Christ; but now when the soul rests in this nearness to Christ, and yet will not part with that one lust for Christ but thinks his condition secured, though that lust be not subdued, who is farther from the Kingdom of God then he?

So our Lord Christ tells the young man, *Mar.* 10. 21. *One thing thou lackest*; why, he was very near heaven, near being a Christian altogether, he was almost saved; he tells Christ he had kept all the commands, *v.* 20. He lacked but *one thing*: I say,

I say, but *one thing*, but it was a great thing; that *one thing* he lacked, was more then all *things* he had, for it was *the one thing necessary*, *Luke* 10. 42. it was a new heart, a work of grace in his soul, a change of state, a heart weaned from the world; I, this was the one thing, and he that lacks this one thing; perishes with his all things else.

2. *This condition is so like a state of grace, that the mistake of it for grace is easie and common*; and it is very dangerous to mistake *any thing* for grace, that is not grace; for in that a man contents himself, as if it were grace. Formality doth often dwel next door to sincerity, and one sign serves both, and so the house may be easily mistaken, and by that means a man may take up his lodging there, and never find the way out again.

What one saith of wisdom, *Multi ad sapientiam pervenissent, nisi se jam pervenisse put assent*; many might have been wise, had they not thought themselves so, when they were otherwise: The same I may say of grace, many a formal professor might have been a sincere believer, had he not mistook his profession for conversion, his duties for grace, and so rested in that for sincerity, which is but Hypocrisie.

3. *It is a degree of blasphemy to pretend to grace, and yet have no grace.* I gather this from that, *Rev.* 2. 9. *I know the blasphemy of them which say, they are Jews and are not.* This place undergoes varieties of constructions, *Grotius* and *Parens* do not mistake their blasphemy to ly in their saying, *they are Jews and are not*; but to ly in the reproaches that these Jews fastened upon Christ, calling him, *Impostor deceiver, one that hath a devil, &c.*

Brightman goes another way, and said, This

was

was the blasphemy of these *Jews*, they retained that way of worship that was abrogated; and thrust upon God those old *rite* and *ceremonies* which Jesus Christ had abolished, *and nailed to his cross*, *Col.* 2. 14. by which they overthrew the glory of Christ, and denied his coming.

But I conceive the blasphemy of these *Jews* to ly in this, that *they said they were Jews and were not.* A *Jew* here is not to be taken literally and strictly only, for one of the lineage of *Abraham*, but it is to be taken *Metonymically*, for a true believer, one of the spiritual seed of *Abraham*; *He is a Jew which is one inwardly*, *Rom.* 3. 26. so that for a man to say he is a *Jew* when he is not, to professe an interest in Christ when he hath none, to say he hath grace when he hath none, this Christ calls blasphemy.

But why should Christ call this blasphemy? this is hypocrisie, but how may it be said to be blasphemy? why, he blasphemes the great attribut of Gods omniscience; he doth implicitly deny that God sees & knows our hearts and thoughts; for if a man did believe the omniscience of God, that he searches the heart, and sees, and knows all within, he would not dare to rest in a graceless profession of godliness; this therefore is blasphemy in the account of Christ.

4. *It is dangerous to be almost a Christian in that this stills and serves to quiet conscience*, ---- *Bello pax ea deterior.* Now it is very dangerous to quiet conscience with any thing but the blood of Christ, it is bad being at peace, till Christ speaks peace; nothing can truly pacifie conscience, less then that which pacifies God, & that is the blood of the Lord Christ. Now the almost Christian quiets con-

conscience, but not with the blood of Christ; it is not a peace flowing from Christs apposition, but a peace rising from a formal profession; not a peace of Christs giving, but a peace of his own making; he silences and bridles conscience with a form of godliness, and so makes it give way to an undoing, soul-destroying peace; he rocks it asleep in the cradle of duties, and then it is a thousand to one it never awaketh more till death or judgement.

Ah, my brethren, it is better to have conscience never quiet, then quieted any way but by *the blood of sprinkling*: a good conscience unquiet, is the greatest affliction to Saints; and an evil conscience quiet, is the greatest judgement to sinners.

5. *It is dangerous to be almost a Christian, in respect of the unpardonable sin*; the sin that the Scripture saith, *Can never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come, Matt.* 12.32. I mean, *the sin against the holy Ghost*; now such are only capable of sinning that sin, as are but almost Christians.

A true believer cannot; the work of grace in his heart, that *seed of God abiding in him*, secures him against it, 1 *John* 3.9. compared with *chap.* 5. 16, 17, 18.

The prophane, ignorant, open sinner cannot; though he lives daily and hourly in sin, yet he cannot commit this sin; for it must be from an enlightned mind; every sinner under the *Gospel* especially, sins sadly against the holy Ghost, against the strivings and motions of the Spirit; he *resists the Holy Ghost, but yet this is* not the sin *against the Holy Ghost*, *Acts* 7.51.

There must be three ingredients to make up that sin.

1. It

1. It muſt be wilful, *Heb.* 10 26. *If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaine no more ſacrifice for ſin.*

2. It muſt be againſt light and convictions, *After we have received the knowledge of the truth.*

3. It muſt be *deſtinata malitia*, in *reſolved malice*, *Blaſpemia in Spiritum Sanctum ea eſt qua quis deſtinatâ malitiâ contra proprium animi ſui ſenſum, Spiritus Sancti gratiam & virtutem. Deique gloriam oppugnat*, *Luc. Brug. in Mat.* 12. now you ſhal find all theſe ingredients into the ſin of the *Phariſees*, *Matt.* 12. 22. Chriſt *heals* one that was *poſſeſſed with a Devill*, a great work, which all the people wondred at, *v.* 23. But what ſay the *Phariſees*? ſee *v* 4. *The fellow caſteth out Devils by the Prince of Devils*; now that this was the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, is clear; for it was both wilful and malicious, and againſt clear convictions; they could not but ſee that he was the Son of God, and that this work was a peculiar work of the Spirit of God in him, and yet they ſay he wrought by the Devil; whereupon Chriſt charges them with this ſin *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, *v.* 31, 33. *Compare this with Mar.* 3. 28, 29, 30. Now theſe *Phariſees* were a ſort of great profeſſors: whence I gather this concluſion; That it is the *profeſſor* of Religion, that is the ſubject of this ſin, not the open carnal ſinner; not the true believer, but the *formal profeſſor*.

Not the ſinner, for he hath neither *light* nor *grace*; not the believer, for he hath both *light* and *grace*; therefore the formal profeſſor, for he hath *light*, but no *grace*. Here then is the greater danger of being but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, he is liable to this dreadful unpardonable ſin.

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6. *This being but almoſt a Chriſtian, ſubjects us to Apoſtaſy*; he that gets no good by walking in the ways of God, will quickly leave them, and walk no more in them; This I gather from *Hoſ.* 14. 9. *Who is wiſe, and he ſhal underſtand theſe things? prudent, and he ſhal know them? for the wayes of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhal walk in them; but the transgreſſion fall therein.*

The juſt ſhal walk in them. He whoſe heart is renewed and made right with God, he ſhal keep cloſe to God in his ways.

But the tranſgreſſor ſhal fall therein. The word in the *Hebrew* is, *peſoanghim*, from a word that ſignifies *to prevaricat*, ſo that we may read the word thus: *The ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhal walk in them; but he that prevaricats*, that is an hypocrit in the *ways of God*, *he ſhal fall therein.*

An unſonnd heart will never hold out long in the wayes of God, *John* 5. 35. *He was a burning and a ſhining light, and ye were willing for a ſeaſon to rejoyce in that light.*

For a ſeaſon) πρὸς ὥραν, for *an hour*, a ſhort ſpace, and then they left him. It is a notable queſtion *Job* puts concerning the hypocrit, *Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty? will he alwayes call upon God? Job* 27. 20.

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He cannot make God his delight.

He cannot perſevere in duties at all times, and in all conditions.

He will be an Apoſtat at laſt: *the ſcab of hypocriſie* uſually breaks out in the *plague-ſore of apoſtaſie:*

stasie: conversion ground is standing ground, it is *terra firma*; at a graceless profession of Religion is a slippery ground; and falling ground. *Julian* the Apostat, was first *Julian* the professor. I know it is possible a believer may fall, but yet *he rises again, the everlasting arms are underneath, Prov.* 24. 26. *Deut.* 33.27. but when the hypocrit falls, who shal help him up?

Solomon saith, *Wo to him that is alone when he falls, Eccl.*4.10. that is, without interest in Christ: why wo to him? *for he hath none to help him up.* If Jesus Christ do not recover him, who can? *David* fell and was restored; for he had one to help him up; but *Judas* fell and perished, for he was alone.

7. *This being but almost a Christian, provokes God to bring dreadful spiritual judgements upon a man.*

Barrenness is a spiritual judgement; now this provokes God to give us up to barrenness. When Christ found the fig-tree that had leaves, but no fruit, he pronounces the curse of barrenness upon it, *Matt.* 21. 19. *Never fruit grow on the more.* And so, *Ezek* 47.11. *The myry places thereof, and the marish places thereof shal not be healed, they shal be given to salt.*

A spirit of delusion is a sad judgement: why? this is the *almost Christians* judgement, that receives the truth, but not in the love of it; *because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*; *for this cause God shal send them strong delusions, 2 Thess* 2. 10, 11, 12.

To lose either light, or sight, either Ordinances, or eyes, is a great spiritual judgement: why? this is the *almost Christians* judgement. He that profits not under the means, provokes God to take away either

either light or sight; either the Ordinances from before his eyes, or else to blind his eyes under the Ordinances, *Luke* 19. 42.

To have a hard heart is a dreadful judgement; and there is no hypocrit but he hath a hard heart.

My brethren, it is a dreadful thing for God to give a man up to spiritual judgements.

Now this being almost a Christian, provokes God to give a man up to spiritual judgement; surely therefore it is a very dangerous thing to be almost a Christian.

8. *Being almost, and but almost Christians, will exceedingly aggravat our damnation.* The higher a man rises under the means, the lower he falls, if he miscarries: He that falls but a little short of heaven, will fall deepest into hell; he that hath been neerest to conversion, being not converted, shal have the deepest damnation when he is judged. *Capernaums* sentence shal exceed *Sodoms* for severity, *Matt.* 11. 23, 24. because she exceeded *Sodom* in the enjoyment of mercy; she received more from God, she knew more of God, she professed more for God, & yet was not right with God, therefore she shal be punished more by God. The higher the rise, the greater the fall; the higher the profession, the lower the damnation, he miscarrieth with a light in his hand, he perisheth under many convictions; and convictions never end but in a sound conversion, as in all Saints: or in a sad damnation, as in all hypocrites: praying ground, hearing ground, professing ground, and conviction ground, is, of all, the worst ground to perish upon.

Now then to sum up all under this head.

If to be almost a Christian hinders the true work of conversion: if it be easily mistaken for conversion:

If

If it be a degree of blasphemy: If this be that which quiets conscience: If this subjects a man to commit the unpardonable sin: If it layes us liable to apostasie: If it provokes God to give us up to spiritual judgements: and if it be that which exceedingly aggravats our damnation: sure then it is a very dangerous thing to be almost, and but almost a Christian.

Oh, labor to be altogether Christians, to go farther then they who have gone farthest, and yet fall short; this is the great counsel of the Holy Ghost, *So run that ye may obtain*, 1 *Cor.* 9. 24, *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure* 2 *Pet.* 1. 10.

Need you any motives to quicken you up to this important duty?

Consid. 1. *This is that which is not only commanded by God, but that whereunto all the commands of God tend:* A perfect conformity of heart and life to God, is the sum and substance of all the commands both of the Old and New Testament. As the Harlot was for the *dividing of the child*, 1 *Kings* 3. 16. 27. so is Satan for dividing the heart; he would have our love and affections shared between Christ and our lusts; for he knows that Christ reckons we love him not at all, unless we love him above all. But God will have all or none. *My Son, give me thy heart, Prov.* 23. 26. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might, Deut.* 6. 5. *& Luke* 12. 27.

Look into the Scripture, and see what that is upon which your *only* stands, and you shal find that God hath fixed it upon those great duties which alone tend to the perfection of your state as Christians. God hath fixed your *only* upon believing, *Matt.* 5. 36. *only believe.*

God

God hath fixed your *only* upon obedience, *Matt.* 4.10. *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve. Phil.* 1.27. *Only let your converſation be as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt:* So that your *only* is fixed by God upon thoſe two great duties of *believing* and *obeying*, both which tend to the perfection of your ſtate as Chriſtians.

Now ſhal God command, and ſhal not we obey? Can there be a higher motive to duty, then the authority of the great God, whoſe will is the eternal rule of Righteouſneſs? O let us fear *God, and keep his commandments*; for this is the *totum hominum*, the whole duty of man, ſo we read it.

Conſid. 2. *The Lord Chriſt is a Savior throughout, a perfect and compleat Mediator*; he hath not ſhed his blood by halves, nor ſatisfied the Juſtice of God, & redeemed ſinners by halves, No, but he went through with his undertaking, he bore all our ſins, and he ſhed all his blood, he died to the utmoſt, ſatisfied the Juſtice of God to the utmoſt, redeemed ſinners to the utmoſt, and now that he is in heaven, he interceedeth to the utmoſt, and is able to ſave to the utmoſt, *Heb.* 7.25.

It is obſerved that our Lord Chriſt when he was upon the earth, in the dayes of his fleſh, he wrought no *Semiplenam curationem*, no half-cures, but whomſoever they brought to him for healing, he healed them throughout, *Matt.* 14.25,26. *They brought unto him all that were diſeaſed, and beſought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment, and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole.*

Oh, what an excellent Phyſician is here! none like him; he cureth *Infallibly*, *Suddenly*, *Perfectly*.

He

He cureth *infallibly*; none ever came to him for healing, that went without it; he never practiſed upon any that miſcarried under his hand.

He cureth *Suddenly*, no ſooner is his garment touched, but his patient is healed, *Mat.* 1. 31. & 12. 21. *Luk.* 8. 41. *The Leper*, *Mat.* 8. 3. is no ſooner touched, but immediatly cured; the two blind men, *Mat.* 20. are no ſooner touched, but their eyes are immediatly opened, *v.* 34.

He cureth, *perfectly*, *As many as were touched, were made perfectly whole*, *Matt.* 14. 37.

Now all this was to ſhow what a perfect and compleat Savior Jeſus Chriſt would be to all ſinners that would but come to him. They ſhould find healing in his blood, vertue in his righteouſneſs, and pardon for all their ſins, whatever they were: Look as Chriſt healed all the *deſeaſes* of all that came to him when he was *on earth*, ſo he pardons all the ſins, and healeth all the wounds of all thoſe ſouls that come to him, now he is in heaven.

He is a Savior throughout, and ſhal not we be Saints throughout? Shal he be altogether a Redeemer, and ſhal not we be altogether Believers? O what a ſhame is this!

3. *There is enough in Religion to engage us to be altogether Chriſtians*, and that whether we reſpect profit or comfort, for grace brings both.

Confid. 3. Firſt, *Religion is a gainful thing*; and this is *argumentum cogens*, a compelling motive, that becomes effectual upon all; Gain is the *God* whom the world worſhips; what will not men do? what will they not ſuffer for gain? what journeys do many take by land? what voyages by ſea, through hot and cole, through fair and foul, through ſtorm and ſhine, through day and night, and all for gain?

Now

Now there is no calling ſo gainful as this of Religion; it is the moſt profitable imployment we can take up. *Godlineſs is profitable unto all things*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. It is μέγας πορισμὸς, a great Revenue, if it be cloſely followed, it brings in the greateſt Income; indeed ſome men are religious for the worlds ſake, ſuch ſhal be ſure not to gain, but they who are religious for Religions ſake, ſhal be ſure not to loſe, if heaven and earth can recompence them; for *Godlineſs hath the promiſe both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 *Tim* 4. 8.

Ah, who would not be a Chriſtian, when the gain of godlineſs is ſo great! many gain much in their wordly calling, but the profit which the true believer hath from one hours communion with God in Chriſt, weigheth down all the gain of the world; curſed be that man who counts all the gain of the world worth one hours commnnion with Jeſus Chriſt, ſaid that Noble Marqueſs *Galeatius Caracciola*. It is no where ſaid in Scripture, happy is the man that findeth ſilver: and the man that getteth fine gold: theſe are of no weight in the ballance of the Sanctuary; but it is ſaid, *Happy is the man that findeth wiſdom, and the man that getteth underſtanding; for the merchandiſe of it is better then the merchandiſe of ſilver, and the gain thereof then fine gold*, Prov. 3. 13, 14.

By wiſdom and underſtanding here, we are to underſtand the grace of Chriſt, and ſo the Spirit of God interpreteth it, *Job.* 28. 28. *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.*

Now of all Merchants, he that trades in this wiſdom and underſtanding, will prove the richeſt

man: one grain of godliness outweigheth all the gold of *Ophir:* There is no riches like being rich in grace: For,

1. *This is the most necessary riches,* other things are not so, silver and gold are not so; we may be, and be happy without them: there is but one thing necessary, and that is the grace of Jesus Christ in the heart; have this, and have all; want this and want all.

2. *It is the most substantial gain.* The things of this world are more shadow then substance: pleasure, honor and profit, comprehend all things in this world, and therefore are the carnal mans Trinity.

Ambitiosus honos, & opes; & sæda voluptas,
Hæc tria pro trino Numine mundus habet.

The Apostle *John* calls them, *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; this,* saith he, *is all that is in the world,* 1 *John* 2. 9. & truly if this be all, all is nothing; for what is pleasure but a dream and conceit? What is honor but fancy and opinion? And what is profit but a thing of nought? *Why wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? Prov.* 23. 5. The things of the world have in them no solid subsistence, though fooliſh carnal men call them substance.

But now grace is a substantial good; so our Lord Christ calls it, *Prov.* 9. 21. *That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, to inherit that which is.* Grace is a reality, other things are but show and fancy.

3. *Godliness is the safest gain.* The gain of worldly things is always with difficulty, but seldom with safety. The soul is often hazarded in

the over-eager purſuit of wordly things; nay, thouſands do pawn, and loſe, and damn their precious ſouls eternally for a little ſilver or gold, which are but the guts and garbage of the earth. *Mark 6.26. And what is a man profited to gain the whole world, if he loſe his ſoul?*

But the gain of godlineſs is ever with ſafety to the ſoul; nay, the ſoul is loſt and undone without it, and not ſaved, but by the attainment of it. A ſoul without grace, is in a loſt and periſhing condition. The hazard of eternity is never over with us, until the grace of Chriſt Jeſus be ſought by us, and wrought in us.

4. *Godlineſs is the ſureſt profit.* 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. As it is ſafe, ſo it is ſure: men make great ventures for the world, but all runs upon uncertainties: many venture much and wait long, and yet find no return, but diſappointment: they ſow much, and yet reap nothing.

But the gain of godlineſs is ſure, *Prov.* 11.18. *In him that ſow the righteouſneſs, ſhal be a ſure reward.* And as the things of this world are uncertain in the getting, ſo they are uncertain in the keeping.

Non minor eſt virtus quam quærere parta tueri.

If men do not undo us, moths may: if robbery doth not, ruſt may: if ruſt doth not, fire may; ſo which all earthly treaſures are incident, as our Lord Chriſt teacheth us. *Matth.* 6. 19. *Solomon* limneth the world with wings, *Prov.* 23. 5. *Rickes take themſelves wings, and flie as an eagle towards heaven.* A man may be rich as *Dives* to day, and yet poor as *Lazarus* to morrow: Oh, how uncertain are all wordly things!

But now the true treasure of grace in the heart, that can never be lost: it is out of the reach both of rust and robber. He that gets the world, gets a good he can never keep; but he that gets grace, gets a good he shal never lose.

5. *The profit of godliness lyeth not only in this world, but in the world to come*, 1 *Tim.* 4 8. All other profit lyeth in this world only: riches and honors, &c, are called this worlds goods, 1 *John* 3. 17. but the riches of godliness is chiefly in the other worlds goods, in the enjoyment of God and Jesus Christ, and the holy Spirit, among Saints and Angels in glory: Lo, this is the *gain of godliness, such honor have all his Saints, Psa.* 149. 9.

6. *The gain of godliness is a durable and eterna gain.* All this worlds goods are perishing: perishing pleasures, perishing honors, perishing profits, perishing comforts, riches are not for ever: saith *Job* 38. 22. *Hast thou entred into the treasures of the snow? Gregory* upon these words observes, that earthly treasures are treasures of snow: what pains do children take to scrape and rowse the snow together to make a snow ball; which is no sooner done, but the heat of the Sun dissolves it, and it comes to nothing. Why? the treasures of worldly men, are but treasures of snow; when death and judgement come, they melt away and come to nothing. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death Prov.* 11. 4.

You see here the great advantage of godliness; so that if we look at profit, we shal find enough in Religion to engage us to be *altogether Christians.*

2. *If we look at comfort*, Religion is the most com-

comfortable profeſſion. There are no comforts to be compared to the comforts of grace and godlineſs.

1. *Wordly comfort is only outward*, it is but skin-deep; *in the midſt of laughter, the heart is ſorrowful, Prov.*14 13. But now the comfort that flows from godlineſs, is an inward comfort, a ſpiritual joy; therefore it is called *gladneſs of heart, Pſalm* 4 7. *Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart:* other joys ſmooths the brow, but this fils the breaſt.

2. *Worldly comfort hath a nether ſpring.* The ſpring of worldly comfort is in the creature, in ſome earthly enjoyment; and therefore the comfort of wordly men muſt needs be mixed and muddy: *An unclean fountain cannot ſend forth pure water, Jam.*3.11. But ſpiritual comfort hath an upper ſpring: the comfort that accompanies godlineſs, flows from the manifeſtations of the love of God in Chriſt, from the workings of the bleſſed Spirit in the heart, which is firſt a Counſellor, and then a Comforter. And therefore the comforts of the Saints muſt needs be pure and unmixed comforts, for they flow from a pure ſpring.

3. *Worldly comfort is very fading and tranſitory. The triumphing of the wicked is but ſhort, and the joy of the hypocrit is but for a moment, Job* 20.5. *Solomon* compares it to the cracking of thorns under a pot, Eccl. 7. 6. which is but a blaze, and ſoon out; ſo is the comfort of carnal hearts: but now the comfort of godlineſs is a durable and abiding comfort; *Your heart ſhal rejoye, and your joy no man ſhal take from you, John* 16,22.

The comfort of godlineſs is laſting, and everlaſting, it abides by us *in life, in death, and after death.*

First, it abides by us in life; *grace & peace* go together, *Phil.* 1. 2. *Col.* 1. 2. godliness brings forth comfort and peace naturally: *the effect of righteousness shal be peace, Isa* 32. 17. It is said of the primitive Christians, *They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Ghost, Acts* 9. 31. Every duty done in uprightness and sincerity, reflects some comfort upon the soul; *In keeping the Commands, there is great reward, Ps* 19. 11. not only for keeping of them, but in keeping of them; as every *flower*, so every duty carries *sweetness* and *refreshing* with it.

Object. *But who more dejected and disconsolat then Saints and Believers? whose lives are more uncomfortable? whose mouths are more filled with complaints then theirs? if a condition of godliness and Christianity, be a condition of so much comfort, then why are they thus?*

Sol. That the people of God are often times without comfort, that I grant; *they may walk in the dark, and have no light, Isa.* 50. 10. but this is none of the product of godliness; grace brings forth no such fruit as this; there is a three-fold rise and spring of it.

Sin within, *desertion* within, and *temptation* within.

1. *Sin within*; the Saints of God are not all spirit and no flesh, all grace and no sin: they are made up of contrary principles: there is light and darkness in the same mind; sin and grace in the same will, carnal and spiritual in the same affections; there is *the flesh lusting against the spirit, Gal.* 5. 17. in all these: and too oft (the Lord knows) is the believer led away captive by these warring lusts;

lusts; so was the holy Apostle himself; *I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me Rom.* 7. 21. and *v.* 23. *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin*; and this was that which broke his spiritual peace, and filled his soul with trouble and complaints, as you see *v.* 24. *Oh, wretched man that I am, who shal deliver me from this body of death.*

So that it is sin that interrupts the peace of Gods people: in-dwelling lust stirring and breaking forth, must needs cause trouble and grief in the soul of a believer; for it is as natural for sin to bring forth trouble, as it is for grace to bring forth peace: every sin contracts a new guilt upon the soul, and guilt provokes God: and where there is a sense of guilt contracted, and God provoked, there can be no peace, no quyet in that soul, till faith procure fresh sprinklings of the blood of Jesus Christ upon the conscience.

2. *Another spring of the believers trouble and disconsolatness of spirit, is the desertion of God*; and this follows upon the former. God doth sometimes disappear, *Ps.* 13. 1. and hide himself from his people: *Verily, thou art a God that hidest thy self, Isa.* 45. 15. But the cause of Gods hiding, is the believers sinning: *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, Isa.* 59. 2. In heaven where there is no sinning, there is no losing the light of Gods countenance for a moment; and if Saints here could serve God without corruption, they should enjoy God without desertion, but this cannot be, while we are in this state, remai-

ning lusts will stir and break forth, and then God will hide his face, and this must needs be trouble: *Thou didest hide thy face, and I was troubled*, *Psal.* 30. 7.

The light of Gods countenance shining upon the soul, is the Christians heaven on this side heaven; and therefore it is no wonder if the hiding of his face be looked upon by the soul, as one of the days of hell, for so it was by *David*; *The sorrows of death compassed me; the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow*, *Ps.* 116. 3.

3. *A third spring of that trouble and complaint that brims the banks of the Christians spirit, is the temptations of Satan*, ὁ ἐχθρὸς, *Matt.* 13. 39. he is the great enemy of Saints, and he envyeth the quyet and comfort that their hearts are filled with, when his conscience is brimmed with horror and terror; and therefore though he knows he cannot destroy their grace, yet he labors to disturb their peace. As the blessed Spirit of God is first a sanctifier, and then a Comforter, working grace in order to peace; so this cursed spirit of hell, is first a *tempter*, and then a *troubler*; first perswading to act sin, and then accusing for sin: and this is his constant practise upon the spirits of Gods people; he cannot endure that they should live in the light of Gods countenance, when himself is doomed to eternal intolerable darkness.

And thus you see whence it is that the people of God are often under trouble and complaint; all arises from these three springs of *sin*, within, *Desertions* without, *Temptations* without.

If the Saints could serve God without sinning, and enjoy God without withdrawing, and resist Satan

Satan without yeelding they might enjoy peace & comfort without ſorrowing: this muſt be endeavored conſtantly here, but it will never be attained fully but in heaven.

But yet ſo far as grace is the prevailing principle in the heart, and ſo far as the power of godlineſs is exerciſed in the life, ſo far the condition of a child of God is a condition of peace; for it is an undoubted truth, *That the fruit of righteouſneſs ſhal be peace.* But ſuppoſe the people of God experience little of this comfort in this life, yet,

2. *They find it in the day of death.* Grace and holineſs will miniſter unto us then, and that miniſtration will be peace. A believer hath a two-fold ſpring of comfort, each one emptying it ſelf into his ſoul in a dying ſeaſon: one is from above him, the other is from within him: the ſpring that runs comfort from above him, is *the blood of Chriſt ſprinkled upon the conſcience:* the ſpring that runs comfort from within him, is *the ſincerity of his heart in Gods ſervice:* When we ly upon a death-bed, and can reflect upon our principles and performances in the ſervice of God, and there find uprightneſs and ſincerity of heart running though all, this muſt needs be comfort. It was ſo to *Hezekiah, Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight, Iſa.38,3.*

Nothing maketh a death-bed ſo uneaſie and hard, as a life ſpent in the ſervice of ſin and luſt: nothing maks a death-bed ſo ſoft and ſweet, as a life ſpent in the ſervice of God and Chriſt. Or put the caſe the people of God ſhould not meet with *this comfort*, then, yet,

3. *They shall be sure to find it after death.* If time bring none of this fruit to ripeness, why yet eternity shal: grace in time, will be glory in eternity: holiness now, will be happiness then: *Whatever it is a man soweth* in this world, *that he shal* be sure to *reap* in the next world. *He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reape life everlasting, Gal.* 6. 7, 8. When sin shal end in sorrow and misery, holiness shal end in joy and glory, *Rom.* 6. 22. *Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, Matt* 25, 23. Whoever shareth in the grace of Christ, and conformeth to the life of Christ in this world, shal share in the joys of Christ in the world to come, and that joy is *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 *Pet.* 1, 18. Lo, here is the fruit of godliness. Say now if there be not enough in Religion, whether we respect profit or comfort, to engage us to be Christians throughout?

Consid. 4. *What an entire resignation wicked men make of themselves to their lusts! and shall not we do so to the Lord Christ?* They give up themselves without reserve to the pleasures of sin; and shal we have our reserves in the service of God? They are altogether sinners, and shal not we be altogether Saints? They *run and not faint* in the service of their lusts, and shal we faint, and not run in the service of Christ? Shal the servants of corruption have their *ears bored*, at the doorposts of sin, in token of an entire and perpetual service, *Exod.* 21 6. and shal we not give up our selves to the Lord Christ: to be his for ever? Shal others make a *covenant with hell and death, Isa.* 28, 15. and

shal

ſhal not *we joyn our ſelves to God in an everlaſting covenant that cannot be forgotten?* Jer. 50. 5. *Acrius ille ad perniciem quam ad ſalutem?* Shal they take more pains to damn their ſouls, then we do to ſave ours? And make more ſpeed to a place of vengeance, then we do to a *crown of righteouſneſs?* 2 *Tim.* 4. 8.

Which do you judge beſt to be ſaved everlaſtingly, or to periſh everlaſtingly? Which do you count the beſt Maſter, God or the Devil? Chriſt or your luſt? I know you will determine it on Chriſts ſide. Oh, then! when others ſerve their luſts with all their hearts, do you ſerve Chriſt with all your heart. *If the hearts of the ſons of men be full ſet in them to do evill,* Eccl. 8. 5. Jer. 3. 5. then much more let the hearts of the ſons of God be fully ſet in them to do good.

Conſid. 5. *If ye are not altogether Chriſtians ye will never be able to appear with comfort before God, not to ſtand in the judgement of the laſt and great day.* For this ſad *dilemma* will ſilence every hypocrit; If my commands were not holy, juſt and good, why didſt thou own them? If they were holy, juſt and good, why didſt thou not obey them? If Jeſus Chriſt was not worth the having, why didſt thou profeſs him? If he was, then why didſt thou not cleave to him, and cloſe with him? If my Ordinances were not appointed to convert & ſave ſouls, why didſt thou ſit under them, and reſt in the performance of them? Or if they were, then why didſt thou not ſubmit to the power of them? If Religion be not good, why doſt thou profeſs it? If it be good, why doſt thou not practiſe it? *Friend, how cameſt thou*

in hither, not having on a wedding garment? Matt. 22,12. If it was not a wedding-feast, why didst thou come at the invitation? If it was, then why didst thou come without a wedding garment?

I would but ask an hypocrital professor of the Gospel, what he will answer in that day? Verily you deprive your selves of all possibility of Apology in the day of the righteous judgement of God. It is said of the man that had no wedding-garment on, that when Christ came and examined him, *he was speechless*: he that is graceless in a day of grace, will be speechless in a day of judgement: professing Christ without a heart to close with Christ, will leave our souls inexcusable, and make our damnation unavoidable, and more intolerable, *Matt.* 11.22.

These are the motives to enforce the duty; and, oh! that God would set them home upon your hearts and consciences, that you might not dare to rest a moment longer in a half-work, or in being Christians within a little, but that you might be altogether Christians.

Quest. *But you will say possibly, How shal I do? What means shall I use, that I may attain to a through work in my heart, that I may be no longer almost, but altogether a Christian?*

Answ. Now I shall lay down three rules of direction, in stead of many, to further and help you in this important duty, and so leave this work to Gods blessing.

Direct. 1. Break off all false peace of conscience: this is the Devils bond to hold the soul from seeking after Christ. As there is the peace of God, so there is the peace of Satan: but they are easily known;

known; for they are as contrary as Heaven and Hell, as light and darkneſs.

The peace of God flows from a work of grace in the ſoul, and is the peace of a regenerat ſtate; but the peace of Satan is the peace of an unregenerat ſtate, it is the peace of death. In the grave, *Job* ſaith, there is peace; *there the wicked ceaſe from troubling*, *Job* 3.17. ſo a ſoul dead in ſin, is full of peace, the wicked one troubleth him not.

The peace of God in the ſoul, is a peace flowing from a removeal of guilt by juſtifying grace, *Rom.* 5.1. *Being juſtified by faith in his blood, we have peace with God.* But the peace of Satan in the ſoul, ariſes, and is maintained by a ſtupidneſs of ſpirit, and inſenſibleneſs of guilt upon the conſcience.

The peace of God is a peace from ſin, that fortifies the heart againſt it: *The peace of God that paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus. Phil* 4.7. The more of this peace there is in the ſoul, the more is the ſoul fortified againſt ſin; but the peace of Satan is a peace in ſin: *The ſtrong man armed keeps the houſe, and there is all at peace. Luke* 11 21. The Saints peace is a peace with God; but not with ſin: the ſinners peace, is a peace with ſin, but not with God; and this is a peace better broke then kept: It is a falſe, a dangerous, an undoing peace. My brethren, death and judgement will break all peace of conſcience, but only that which is wrought by Chriſt in the ſoul, and is the fruit of the blood of ſprinkling. *When he gives quyetneſs, who can make trouble? Job* 34.29. Now that peace that death will break, why ſhould you keep? Who would

be fond of that quietness which the flames of hell will burn in sunder? and yet how many travel to hell, through the fools Paradise of a false peace?

Oh, break off this peace; for we can have no peace with God in Christ, whilst this peace remains in our hearts. *Intus existens prohibet alienum.* The Lord Christ gives no peace to them that will not seek it; and that man will never seek it, that doth not see his need of it: and he that is at peace in his lusts, sees no need of the peace of Christ. The sinner must be wounded for sin, and troubled under it, before Christ will heal his wounds, and give him peace from it.

Direct. 2. *Labor after a through-work of conviction.* Every conviction will not do it; the *almost Christian* hath his convictions, as well as the *true Christian*, or else he had never gone so far; but they are not sound and right convictions, or else he had gone farther. God will have the soul truly sensible of the bitterness of sin, before it shall taste the sweetness of mercy. The plow of conviction must go deep, and make deep furrows in the heart, before God will sow the precious seed of grace and comfort there, that so it may have depth of earth to grow in. This is the constant method of God. First, to show man his sin, then his Savior. First, his danger, then his Redeemer. First, his wound, then his cure. First, his own vileness, then Christs righteousness. We must be brought to cry out, *Unclean, unclean: to mourn for him whom we have pierced*, and then he sets open for us a *fountain to wash in for sin, and for uncleanness*, Zech. 12.4. the last verses, compared

pared with *Zech.* 13. 1. That is ... otable place, *Job* 33. 17, 28. *He looked upon men, and if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit, and his life ſhal ſee the light.* The ſinner muſt ſee the unprofitableneſs of his unrighteouſneſs before he profits by Chriſts righteouſneſs. The *Iſraelits* ere firſt ſtung with the fiery ſerpents, and then the brazen ſerpent is ſet up, *Num.* 21. 6. 8. *Ephraim* is firſt throughly convinced, and then Gods bowels of mercy work towards him. Thus it was with *Paul*, *Manaſſeh*, the *Jaylor*, *&c.* So that this is the unchangeable method of God in working grace, to begin with conviction of ſin,

Oh, therefore labor for through conviction: and there are three things we ſhould eſpecially be convinced of.

Firſt, *be convinced of the evil of ſin*, the filthy and hainous nature of it: this is the greateſt evil in the world; it wrongs God, it wounds Chriſt, it grieves the holy Spirit, it ruineth a precious ſoul; all other evils are not to be named with this. My brethren, though to do ſin be the worſt work yet to ſee ſin is the beſt ſight; for ſin diſcovered in its vileneſs, makes Chriſt to be deſired in his fulneſs.

But above all; labor to be convinced of the miſchief of an unſound heart; what an abhorring it is to God, what certain ruin it brings upon the ſoul. O think oftens of the *hypocrits hell*, *Matt.* 14. 51.

2. *Be convinced of the miſery and deſperat danger of a natural condition:* For till we ſee the plague of our hearts, and the miſery of our ſtate by nature,

ture, we ſhall never be brought out of our ſelves, to ſeek help in another.

Thirdly, *be convinced of the utter inſufficiency and inability of any thing below Chriſt Jeſus, to miniſter relief to thy ſoul in this caſe.* All things beſides Jeſus Chriſt are *Phyſicians of no value*, *Job* 13.4. Duties, performances, prayers, tears, ſelf-righteouſneſs, avail nothing in this caſe; they make us like the *troops of Tema*. *Job* 16. 19, 20. *to return aſhamed* at our diſappointment from ſuch *failing brooks*.

Alace! it is an infinit righteouſneſs that muſt ſatisfie for us, for it is an infinit God that is offended by us. If ever thy ſin be pardoned, it is infinit mercy that muſt pardon it: if ever thou be reconciled to God, it is infinit merit muſt do it: if ever thy heart be changed, and thy ſtate renewed, it is infinit power muſt effect it: and if ever thy ſoul eſcape hell, and be ſaved at laſt, it is infinit grace muſt ſave it.

In theſe three things right and ſound conviction lyeth, and whereever the Spirit of God worketh theſe through convictions, it is in order to a true and ſound converſion, for by this means the ſoul is brought under a right qualification for the receiving Chriſt.

You muſt know, that a ſinner, *quatenus* a ſinner, can never come to Chriſt; for he is dead in ſin, in enmity againſt Chriſt, an enemy to God, and the grace of God: but there are certain qualifications that come between the ſouls dead ſtate in ſin, and the work of converſion and cloſing with Chriſt, whereby the ſoul is put into a capacity of receiving the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. For no

man

man is brought immediatly out of his dead ſtate, and made to believe in Jeſus Chriſt; there are *termini mediantes*, ſome qualifications coming in between: now ſound convictions are the right qualifications for the ſinners receiving Chriſt; *For he came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance, Matth.* 9, 12, 13. that is, ſuch as ſee themſelves ſinners, & thereby in a loſt condition: So *Luke* explains it, *The Son of man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt, Luke* 9. 10. *He is anointed and ſent to bind up the broken hearted, to comfort all that mourn, Iſa.* 61. 1, 2.

Oh, therefore, if you would be ſound Chriſtians, get ſound convictions; ask thoſe that are believers indeed, and they will tell you, had it not been for their convictions, they had never ſought after Chriſt for ſanctification and ſalvation: They will tell you they had periſhed if they had not periſhed; they had been in *eternal bondage*: but for their *ſpiritual bondage*, had they not been loſt as to themſelves, they had been utterly loſt as to Chriſt.

Direct. 3. *Never reſt in convictions, till they end in converſion.* This is that wherein moſt men miſcarry; they reſt in their convictions, and take them for converſion; as if ſin ſeen were therefore forgiven; or as if a ſight of the want of grace, were the truth of the work of grace.

That is a notable place in *Hoſ.* 13. 13. *Ephraim is an unwiſe ſon; for he ſhould not ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.* The place of the breaking forth of children is the womb: as the child comes out of the womb, ſo is converſion born out of the womb of conviction: Now when the

child sticks between the womb and the world, it is dangerous; it hazards the life both of mother and child; so when a sinner rests in conviction, and and goes no farther, but sticks *in the place of the breaking forth of children*, this is very dangerous, and hazards the life of the soul.

You that are at any time under *convictions*; Oh, take heed of resting in them; do not *stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children*: though it is true that conviction is the first step to conversion, yet it is not conversion: A man may carry his convictions along with him into hell.

What is that which troubleth poor creatures when they come to die, but this; I have not improved my convictions; at such a time I was convinced of sin, but yet I went on in sin, in the face of my convictions: in such a Sermon I was convinced of such a duty, but I slighted the conviction: I was convinced of my want of Christ, and of the readiness of Christ to pardon and save, but, alace! I followed not the conviction.

My brethren, remember this, *slighted convictions* are the worst death-bed companions. There are two things especially which above all others make a death-bed very uncomfortable.

1. *Purposes and promises not performed.*
2. *Conviction slighted, and not improved.*

When a man takes up purposes to close with Christ, and yet puts them not into execution, and when he is convinced of sin and duty, and yet improves not his convictions; Oh! this will sting, and wound at last.

Now therefore hath the Spirit of the Lord been at work in your souls? Have you ever been convin-

vinced of the evil of ſin, of the m[illegible]y of a natu[illegible] ſtate; of the inſufficiency of all th[illegible]gs under hea-ven to help, of the fulneſs and righteouſneſs of Je-ſus Chriſt; of the neceſſity of reſting upon him for pardon and peace; for ſanctification and ſalva-tion? Have you ever been really convinced of theſe things? Oh! then, as you love your own ſouls, as ever you hope to be ſaved at laſt, and en-joy God for ever, improve theſe convictions, and be ſure you reſt not in them till they riſe up to a through cloſe with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo end in a ſound and perfect converſion. Thus ſhal you be not only *almoſt*, but *altogether Chriſtians.*

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